

“THE ANTITHESIS OF THE TRADITIONAL ELF:”
DECONSTRUCTING RACIAL REPRESENTATIONS IN *DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS*
AND R.A. SALVATORE’S *THE LEGEND OF DRIZZT*

A Thesis Submitted to the College of
Graduate and Postgraduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts
In the Department of English
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

By

CARINA PULS

PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis/dissertation in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis/dissertation work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis/dissertation or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis/dissertation.

DISCLAIMER

Reference in this thesis/dissertation to any specific commercial products, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the University of Saskatchewan. The views and opinions of the author expressed herein do not state or reflect those of the University of Saskatchewan, and shall not be used for advertising or product endorsement purposes. Requests for permission to copy or to make other uses of materials in this thesis/dissertation in whole or part should be addressed to:

Head of the English Department

Arts Building, 9 Campus Drive

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A5 Canada

OR

Dean College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

University of Saskatchewan

107 Administration Place Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A2 Canada

Abstract

This thesis examines the implications of subverting the appearance, characteristics, and morality of the fantasy race of the elves. This attempt at subversion exposes the limitations and liberations that some races have, particularly their ability to transcend their expected racial identity to establish a personal identity. Our long historical fascination with elves establishes them as a means to understand issues of particular times in the Anglo-Saxon culture, the Renaissance, Victorian England, and Tolkien. *Dungeon and Dragons*' introduction of the drow in a popular game allows for exploration of how people understand these different races and what racial expectations linger in the cultural imagination. Comparing the traditional surface elves to the drow and Drizzt Do'Urden to Artemis Entreri in R. A. Salvatore's *The Legend of Drizzt* series further allows an exploration of how we think about race and the limitations or freedoms we permit to different creatures. Scholars have examined the cultural and historical significance of the elves, explored how *D&D* works and reinforces cultural thinking about race, and have begun to examine Salvatore's elves, but no in-depth work has yet been done on racial representations in these works. This thesis will help to fill this current research gap and further the conversation on racial representations in fantasy literature and popular culture.

Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my thanks to all my friends, family, committee, readers, and all who provided support or worked through various drafts with me over the course of this project. Working on a thesis is a more ambitious project than it seems at the beginning and has been a growing experience from beginning to end. Through everyone's suggestions, not only did my thesis develop, but also my writing. I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Doug Thorpe, for his support and teaching throughout the entire process; this thesis could not have happened without his efforts. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Peter Hynes, Dr. Kathleen James-Cavan, and Dr. Frank Klaassen for their feedback throughout this process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE.....	i
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
INTRODUCTION: THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ELVES.....	1
CHAPTER 1: THE CULTURAL INFLUENCE OF THE ELVES IN ANGLO-SAXON CULTURE, THE RENAISSANCE, VICTORIAN ENGLAND, AND TOLKIEN’S WRITINGS.....	22
CHAPTER 2: FANTASY’S WORLDBUILDING, THE CREATION OF <i>DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS</i> , AND WRITING THE DROW	39
CHAPTER 3: “FANTASY IS RACIST:” EXPLORING SALVATORE’S RACIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ELVES, DROW, AND HUMANS IN <i>THE LEGEND OF DRIZZT</i>	64
CONCLUSION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RACIAL REPRESENTATIONS IN FANTASTIC WORLDS.....	91
WORKS CITED.....	100

Introduction: The Cultural Significance of the Elves

Racial representation is a powerful tool used to signify differences among people and has affected how people understand themselves and others. From its first uses as a “defensive ideology” to justify the slave trade to the contemporary attempts for global equality, racial representation—and racism by extension—continues to influence cultural perceptions of others (Storey 173). People strive to overcome viewpoints which promote racial—and often by consequence racist—thinking, providing an opportunity for scholars to question the cultural significance of race and racial representations in fantasy literature. Most scholarly work on racial representations in fantastic worlds focuses on charges of or defenses against racism, with less focus on the representations themselves (Young “Diversity” 351). Various fantasy races can be used to examine how racial attitudes seep into popular culture. The variety of fantasy races allows for new perspectives to emerge when readers compare themselves to these creatures. One of the most prominent fantastic races is the elves who have a long presence in western culture and are a staple of post-Tolkien fantasy. Elves have adopted different purposes and identities, but their enduring popularity is especially prominent after the success of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. With the success of his works, came the standardization of certain tropes, the repeated formulas used to represent fantasy races and other tropes. In post-Tolkien fantasy, elves are increasingly popular with new forms emerging. The most notable new form is the dark elf/drow introduced in *Dungeons and Dragons (D&D)*, a tabletop role-playing game. As Tolkien not only popularized but standardized his version of the elves, so did R.A. Salvatore who developed the drow in *The Legend of Drizzt*. These creatures are unique as they were designed to be the “antithesis of the usual elf,” subverting Tolkien’s physical and moral standard of elves (Gygax “Gamasutra” par. 41). The elves, whether traditional or subverted, allow people to

explore contemporary issues; they currently represent the implications of contemporary constructions of racial hierarchies. Salvatore, with his Tolkien and *D&D* roots, has the potential to reinforce or subvert racial understandings of different creatures. By exploring the elves' cultural importance with *D&D* and Salvatore's influence in the drow's development, this thesis will explore how racial thinking permeates popular culture and fantasy races to reveal how people currently think about race.

One way to explore popular culture is through the study of fantasy literature. Through fantasy, people engage in a popular cultural production of meaning often exploring one's relationship to others. Scott McCracken argues that "popular fiction can supply us with the narratives we need to resituate *ourselves* in relation to the world" (17, emphasis in original). His thesis is that people read popular fiction to determine who they are and gain a sense of self. Not only is a sense of self gained, but readers also achieve an idea of what they should strive to become. Kathryn Hume argues that fantasy is expressive literature, presenting readers "with a new interpretation of reality" (xii). By offering new ways to explore reality, fantasy serves as a metaphor for reality. The characters, events, and worlds can help readers to understand their own world. By separating different aspects of what it means to be human through various fantastic races, people can gain a new appreciation of how they think about human identity, fears, and aspirations.

Fantasy literature is a fascinating genre for exploring new interpretations of reality, especially with the idea of race and racism. Fantasy literature's popularity rose when the social sciences discredited the idea of racial difference between humans which caused people to question the stereotypes associated with different ethnic groups. As ideas of race became increasingly unacceptable, fantasy literature offered an outlet where racism became a useful plot

device. The terminology used in fantasy, using the word “race” rather than “species,” suggests a shift in moving racial ideologies into a literary form. In many fantasy texts, racial difference means little beyond identifying heroes and villains, creating a signal for conflict. Fantasy can never truly be isolated from our world because it relies on signifiers and concepts which come from our world; race and racism are a few examples of negative concepts which have emerged and found new life with a comfortable enough distance from our world that readers are less likely to see a problem how these ideas function. It is, therefore, vital for readers to examine racial representations in comparison to real-world consequences.

This thesis addresses representations of fantastic races. The term “race,” therefore, must be contextualized for its applications to fantasy literature. The OED defines race as “a group of people, animals, or plants, connected by common descent or origin.” In early uses, the term often had a modifying adjective to distinguish races, like the “British race.” This adjectival use led to distinct ethnic sets, making race a means to categorize, separate, and understand others. The resulting problem is that because people can be easily categorized, it is easier to rank them, leading to the development of racial prejudice and discrimination. Robert Sussman argues that racial prejudice is “fueled by the same underlying theory that human variation can be easily put into simple categories (racial classification), that these categories are inherently distinct, [and] that they are ranked to make some ‘races’ superior to others” (304). Excluding the moral problems these ideas raise, scientific evidence suggests that “all humans belong to the same species and that ‘race’ is not a biological reality but a myth, and yet it is still believed even today” (Sussman 1). This cultural construct continues because “the belief in human races, carrying along with it the prejudice and hatred of ‘racism’ is so embedded in our culture and has been an integral part of our worldview for so long that many of us assume that it just must be

true” (Sussman 12). Henry Gates suggests that the problem with the idea of race is quite simple: “race, as a meaningful criterion within the biological sciences, has long been recognized to be a fiction. ...we speak in biological misnomers and, more generally, in metaphors” (4). Race is, therefore, a metaphor of difference, which is used to help people distinguish themselves from others. This metaphor is especially applicable for fantasy literature where race is usually the first indicator of difference.

Despite being scientifically proven to be inaccurate, ideas of racial difference persist because of how popular thought reaffirms this belief; ideas of race stem from a cultural tendency to place everything in hierarchies. This value can be traced from medieval Christian thought and is understood by viewing medieval maps of the world. Most maps depict the world’s order hierarchically with God and the heavens at the top; directly below are the angels, men, animals, plants, the devils, and Satan respectively. This structure did not change when people shifted from religion to science during the Enlightenment because scientists also sought out the natural order of the world. When discussing biological classification, C. Brace explains that “Linnaeus and his contemporaries simply took the general view and provided a more specific picture of all aspects of the world arranged in a series of steps running from God at the top down through the various entities of the world to the inorganic,” the Great Chain of Being (28). Although these pictures were intended to help people understand the world, they reinforced the need for hierarchies. These viewpoints transferred directly from historical fact to literature. When explorers sought out new lands, their discoveries fed a frenzy to conquer and to expand a nation’s power. Europeans, believing themselves to be civilized people, taught the new nations their way of life and established themselves as superior. Literature reflected these beliefs, and the hierarchies

persisted. Thus, it is no surprise that fantastic creatures are also arranged in hierarchies for audiences to understand who they are and what they represent.

Tolkien's prominence in popular thought and his continuing popularity contribute to racial difference becoming "the default setting for Fantasy, making race the conventional framework around which difference is built in the genre. It shapes worlds, societies, peoples, cultures, and conflicts" (Young *Race* 35). Tolkien's influence in creating racial difference as the default setting is part of the genre's continuing formula for quick sales and easy consumption. Michael Chabon argues that fantasy relies on "conventionality" as a marketing tool and cannot transcend the limitations of the genre for fear of losing sales (20). Books must share familiar character types and story arcs to be marketable as fantasy. These similarities explain why an elf is always a good, forest dweller with superior fighting skills. This formula applies to all aspects of fantasy: elves and dwarves do not get along; the orcs are evil; the list goes on. The formula has remained relatively unchanged for so long that the saying "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" applies. However, the rules have never been inflexible. Anne Balay has some interesting insights into genre conventions and how "fantasy is about rules, and therefore about rule violations" (924). Writers have always played with the rules, and *D&D* and Salvatore experimented with the elves' rules by creating the drow. Balay argues further that fantasy's purpose is to "try out new realities, and expand the limits of possibility, though always referencing the world as we know it" (925). The world still needs to be familiar, but fantasy can expand these new understandings: elves can be evil only if they are an idealized version of evil because they are idealized creatures. Their evil, while remaining elves, is the new rule-bending aspect, but the fact that they are still superior creatures, even in their wickedness, is the familiar point of reference. As readers become accustomed to how far the rules can stretch, authors can then push the boundary further. Small

steps are necessary as it may be considered too risky shortly after Tolkien's success to create an evil yet incompetent elf, and even now that representation would likely generate resistance from readers who expect an elf to fit a racial type. It is usually a slow process to introduce new features, abilities, or moralities because popular culture defines what an elf is, but, as we shall see in the case of the drow, small integrations can become successful alternatives to traditional elven identities.

Eliminating racial attitudes towards different creatures is not an easy task as these ideas are strongly engraved in popular thought. Helen Young argues that the "race-based ideologies behind the social systems which privileged [Tolkien and Robert E. Howard] as White men very strongly influenced the shape of the worlds they imagined, worlds which were decidedly Eurocentric and reproduced White race-thinking" (*Race* 16). She refers to their historical contexts as well as the sources from which they drew inspiration. These contexts and sources can have subtle or overt influences over how they represent and create their worlds. While it is beyond this thesis' scope to examine the inspirations behind these authors, what is important to discuss is the implications of their ways of thinking. Tolkien could easily draw inspiration for racial constructions from the texts he studied as a scholar as well as the racial conflicts he would have seen or heard about during his lifetime. It is logical that these kinds of constructions, surrounding him in literature and life, would influence his fantastic racial constructions. The difficulty in trying to avoid thinking about race stems from the idea's historical prominence in cultural thought which, as Young argues, affects all writers, even those of ethnic minorities—those who seem like the ideal writers to disrupt this tradition. Young cites Tolkien and Howard as two of the central writers who helped establish these racial ideologies in the literature of their time and the present.

Although fantastic races are not human, they are subject to human hierarchy, based on a moral alignment assigned to each race. Alignment is “a character’s dedication to a set of moral principles” (Heinsoo, Collins, Wyatt 19). Their placement on the alignment scale is significant in its reflection of cultural thinking about these creatures, and it is also problematic. *D&D*’s alignment scale, a general breakdown defining the different types of good versus evil, presents a “centralized worldview” which applies a universal standard of how to understand a race based only on alignment (quinn par. 11). It is through alignment’s application that people can see what they think of different races. Isiah Lavender argues that because “the fantastic is so much a part of popular culture, fantasy literature can represent or address the racial attitudes of its audience” (188). As post-colonial narratives provide insight into how people think about race, fantasy reveals how people think about imaginary races and the implications of their thought process. There are clear racial boundaries based on good and evil. Chris Van Dyke stresses that humans are the “normative race in [*D&D* and] humans can be interpreted as representing ‘white people.’ They are ‘normal,’ while other races, whether good or evil, are to some extent ‘exotic’ or ‘otherized’” (par. 4). He raises the issue of whiteness among humans and the placement of other races in correspondence to how humanlike creatures are. Because humans are the “normative” race in fantasy, the genre can be defined as anthropocentric, placing all nonhuman creatures in relation to how human they are. For example, because Tolkien’s Elves are what he proposes humanity should aspire to become, they are a revered race and are placed higher up the racial hierarchy. In contrast, goblins—who are the antithesis of what humans should become based on their greed, ugliness, and simplistic means—are further down the ladder and are therefore inferior to humans. This comparison applies to all fantastic creatures. Racial representations in

these hierarchical structures can, therefore, be interpreted as an understanding of what it means to be human alongside human fears and aspirations of what they can become.

Defining the Elf

There are many variations of elves, so a definition is needed. The OED defines an elf as a “supernatural creature of folk tales, typically represented as a small, delicate, elusive figure in human form with pointed ears, magical powers, and a capricious nature.” This definition does align with many elves. Tolkien’s Elves, however, are notable exceptions who are tall, delicate only in appearance. Most contemporary representations of the elves are Tolkienesque elves—elves with similar morality, appearance, and abilities to Tolkien’s Elves. Definitions of the earlier elves will be focused on in chapter one in relation to each historical period to see the cultural significance of these creatures.

Literature Review: Elves in Historical Contexts, *D&D*, and Racial Representations in Fantasy Literature

The elves may be considered a strange choice for exploring racial constructions in fantasy literature, but there is a long historical tradition of people using elves as a way to question current beliefs. Elven representation reflects historical and cultural thought as these creatures are “squeezed out at cultural pressure points” to examine contemporary issues through literature (Buccola 201). The purpose of this thesis is two-fold: to explore the elves’ long cultural history and then to apply their representations and what they signify in understanding racial difference. They serve as a way into this new and difficult territory, epitomizing many key issues in popular culture—beauty, morality, capability, and idealization—which allow the elves to be superior to other creatures. Despite the extensive cultural history of the elves, scholarship regarding the elves did not begin seriously until the nineteenth century. After the Shakespeare

revival and the introduction of folklore as a discipline, scholars focused on the elves, and their synonym “fairies,” to examine how people used these creatures as literary and cultural symbols. Most scholarly examinations of the elf occurred after Tolkien’s publications and most prominently in the last ten years. Some scholarly work focuses on examining cultural interactions with these fictional creatures. One example is Alaric Hall’s *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England: Matters of Belief, Health, Gender and Identity*, a linguistic work focused on understanding a culture through language, especially language expressing non-dominant cultural beliefs. Richard Green agrees with Hall by using the fairies as a means to study minority religious culture, particularly with fairyland as a point of contention between Church and folklore (2). For elven representations, Hall is the central author for Anglo-Saxon culture to understand the shifting cultural influences of the elves during this time. Hall’s book focuses on linguistic examination. Having the word *aelfwine*, meaning “elf-friend,” implies that there were some positive connotations of knowing elves, providing hints to how the Anglo-Saxons understood the elves. Through language, academics can determine how people responded to the elves. Hall’s research inspects the eighth century, using careful linguistic analysis to reveal Anglo-Saxon beliefs about gender, health, and identity. One example he uses is how scholars can interpret gender roles through language. He explains how “Old English had no close equivalent words for the supernatural feminine and generally unthreatening nymphs; words for supernatural females denoted monstrous or otherwise dangerous beings” (“Glosses” 139). This fact was problematic when scholars tried to gloss nymphs, meaning “seductive, beautiful and otherworldly females,” but the closest available term, *aelf*, was masculine and could not be used (Hall *England* 94). By the eleventh century, *aelf* had a female connotation, revealing the underlining vitality of beliefs about elves in Christian Anglo-Saxon culture. This alteration is one

example of how language adapts to reflect cultural change; language “influences how people communicate their thoughts and so how communities construct their shared realities” (*England* 142). If an idea was popular enough to require new terminology, then there is cultural importance behind the change. Although the elves tended to appear fleetingly in medieval manuscripts, they appeared often enough for Hall to claim that they have a “canonical place in histories of medieval popular religion,” providing a way to study religious minority culture (*England* 3). In the final line of his article “Glosses, Gaps and Gender: The Rise of Female Elves in Anglo-Saxon Culture,” Hall stresses that “words change, but the meanings of their changes may extend far beyond the lexicon,” affecting culture itself (162). Thus, the elves are used to examine culture.

During the Renaissance, the popular term “elf” transitioned to “fairy,” and scholarly work focusing on fairies in the Renaissance also used the fairies to study culture. Regina Buccola argues that fairies became a way to negotiate socioeconomic changes, especially for women, and provided scapegoats for domestic troubles (32; 47). Matthew Woodcock and Alfred Nutt focus on literary foundations for fairy literature. Woodcock’s work is important for examining authors’ use of the fairy to celebrate Queen Elizabeth who, like the Queens in Fairyland, was the sole or superior sovereign of an empire. He examines Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* and how this text helped further popularize the fairy by praising their queen. Nutt discusses Shakespeare’s influence in establishing fairy culture in Renaissance London. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is a source which authors would continue to draw from. Fairy literature became very popular during the Renaissance and revealed cultural attitudes.

Nicola Brown’s discussion of the fairy as a “persuasive cultural figure” highlights the Victorian fascination with fairies (1). Carole Silver agrees with Brown that the “cultural

preoccupation of the fairies...is a hallmark of the era” (3). On the opening page of Brown’s introduction, she describes the complicated relationship which the Victorians had with fairies:

The Victorians thought of themselves as makers and masters of the modern world: that is the self-image they were most anxious to pass on to posterity. But they also felt oppressed by their responsibilities, fearful of the future and doubtful of the unalloyed benefits of progress. Fear, anxiety, doubt and pessimism cannot be magicked away, it is true, but they can be given an enchanted form. The Victorians dreamed of fairies, who worked a small enchantment for them, and gave them back the wonder and mystery modernity had taken away from the world. (1)

Fairyland provides an escape, leading to Brown’s argument that the “Victorians’ enchantment with fairyland is central to understanding their emotional responses to their own world” (2).

Fairies suggested an escape from the real world of industrialization into a world where these creatures served as idealized versions of humans. This representation is significant in how the fairies’ bodies represent a human desire to perfect themselves both outside and within, a trait influencing future representations. A fairy “presents the human body...[a] perfect version from which the appalling power and terrible weaknesses of the human being have been erased” (Brown 70). The perfected body reflects moral, spiritual, and intellectual superiority. While it cannot be stated with any certainty exactly how much people believed in the fairies at the time, Brown’s interpretation helps to explain the undeniable fascination that has continued to this day.

No thesis on elves could be complete without a section on JRR Tolkien, who sought to return fairies to their elvish roots. Tom Shippey argues that one of Tolkien’s motivations in writing fantasy was to recover the “authentic tradition” of elven identity hidden behind multiple and contradictory meanings (“Elf Problem” 12). The variety of cultural and linguistic traditions

which Shippey explores raises the importance of elven identity: the need to clarify what elves mean to readers and how people respond to elves, especially in their idealized versions. Tolkien established his Elves as a “parallel race to Men” representing the “artistic, aesthetic, and purely scientific aspects of the Humane nature raised to a higher level than is actually seen in Men,” so that Elves are a model for what humans should aspire to become (*Letters* 10; 236). With this idealization and Tolkien’s intent for them to be a model for human living, it is essential to understand how elven values apply to human life.

The literature on *D&D* has expanded over the years but remains limited. Much of the scholarly work written about *D&D* in the 1980-90s focuses on debates around whether *D&D* was a positive or negative cultural force. Some Christian scholars of the time argued that *D&D* recruits players to Satan with blasphemous claims, teaches about witchcraft and occult spells, and presents false perceptions of reality (Leithart and Grant). These critics were countered with studies on the lack of correlation between exposure to the game and emotional instability (Carroll and Carolin; DeRenard and Kline; Simón; Lancaster); the helpfulness of roleplaying as a therapeutic means (Hughes; Raghuraman); and *D&D* as a new narrative performance (Mackay). Joseph Laycock’s work examines the moral panics of the 1980s-90s, observing social, cultural, and religious concerns. His work examines how shared social constructions of reality within a game setting can disturb these other realms. As a recent publication, he examines why people believed what they did at the time and where their fears were rooted to situate the panic in its historical context. Finally, Gary Fine’s work is a central piece of *D&D*’s scholarship. Because of when this work was published, he often apologizes for studying something “trivial” but does work to justify his interests and its relevance (1). Some of the information has become outdated since publication (most notably on player groups, particularly in gender), but his work on the

game's social structure and meaning creation remains relevant. More recent scholarship on *D&D* has shifted from historical contexts and focuses more on connections to digital narratives and the ludology versus narratology debate. Daniel Mackay's book is important in articulating how *D&D* maintains a "dialogue" with popular culture and suggests that the game can be studied as a performative art and new way of oral storytelling (20). The direction scholarship is going tends to feature researchers who do not apologize for studying the game as previous scholars felt they needed to, focusing instead on presenting their work to both popular and scholarly communities without fear or shame.

Finally, racial representation is a central concept for this thesis, but most scholarly research on racial representations have been grounded in realistic texts rather than fantastic texts. Within fantastic genres, most of the research has been in science fiction rather than fantasy (Saldívar). Young is the first person to publish a book-length work on fantasy representations of race, highlighting in her introduction the need for further research. This thesis answers her call to explore general representations but particularly the elves who represent in contemporary fantasy an idealized version of humanity. Racial representations understood within this context give insight into what it means to idealize a fantastic race and the distinctions made between the races. Van Dyke's anthropocentric model invites racial comparison to see what people value and what traits they desire to distance themselves from.

The Dark Elf Problem

The varying descriptions and narrative purposes of the elves lead scholars to the elf problem: the question of what it means to be an elf. Shippey identifies "the elf problem," the examination of not only what the elves are but what they represent. If it is important to study what an elf is, then the dark elf deserves equal investigation despite their shorter history,

especially regarding the implicit racial complications this name raises. Shippey's article "Light-elves, Dark-elves, and Others: Tolkien's Elvish Problem" is one of the first to address the issue of the dark elf, especially the connection between different types of elves resulting in problems of nomenclature and meaning. His research leads to what can be labeled the dark elf problem: how the deliberate subversion of the elves affects how scholars understand these idealized creatures and the consequences of what this means for readers who have typically experienced elves as what humans should strive to become. The racial implications of having a physically and morally idealized creature transformed into a black-skinned and malicious creature, although still physically beautiful, cannot be brushed aside because it exists within a fantasy setting; there are real-world consequences for these signifiers. No other early sources refer to dark elves besides Sturluson Snorri, perhaps in part due to the varied nature of medieval elves (Simpson 78). In *The Edda*, Snorri uses "light-elves," "dark-elves," "black-elves," and "dwarves" without distinction between the terms. This wording has caused scholars from Jacob Grimm to J.R.R. Tolkien to question the differences between these elves regarding temperament and physical appearance. The following passage in the *Edda* introduces some background on these creatures:

Sá er einn staðr þar er kallaðr er Álfheimr. Þar byggvir fólk þat er ljósálfar heita, en dökkálfar búa niðri í jörðu, ok eru þeir ólíkir þeim sýnum en myklu ólíkari reyndum. Ljósálfar eru fegri en sól sýnum, en dökkálfar eru svartari en bik.

There is one place that is called Alfheim. There live the folk called light-elves, but dark-elves live down in the ground, and they are unlike them in appearance, and even more unlike them in nature. Light-elves are fairer than the sun to look at, but dark-elves are blacker than pitch. (19-20)

One problem is that Snorri does not use his terms consistently. Shippey claims that sometimes when he uses the term “Dark-elves” (*dökkálfar*), he means that they are black (*svart*) which would suggest that they are “black-elves” (*svartálfar*) (4). This argument is unconvincing because elsewhere in Snorri's work, it is clear that when he says "black-elves" (*svartálfar*), he means dwarves (4). This confusion has lead Shippey to ask the following questions:

1. What are light-elves and dark-elves, and what is the difference between them if it is not a matter of color?
2. If it is not a matter of color, why does Snorri say that dark-elves are black?
3. If dwarves are different from elves, as almost all early evidence agrees, then why call them black-elves? (“Elf Problem” 8)

These questions of racial identities and physical appearances have been considered since the nineteenth century with unsatisfactory results. The interchangeability of Snorri’s terms creates for Tolkien the essential problem of nomenclature. Shippey argues that Tolkien’s Middle-earth writings were an examination of this linguistic question to determine the “authentic tradition...which gave rise to Snorri and *Beowulf* and the Eddic poems and the Anglo-Saxon charms and all the other scraps of evidence, which however integrated them, resolved their contradictions, and explained the nature of their misunderstanding” (“Elf Problem” 12). Tolkien attempted to synthesize the contradictions of the dark elf and black elf through his writings by focusing on a spiritually centered Elven hierarchy. In a letter to a fan, Tolkien explains the difference between his Elves: “The *Eldar* who heard the summons of the Valor or Powers to pass from Middle-earth over the Sea...[and] the Lesser Elves who did not answer it” (173). The Elves who never beheld the Light of the Sun and Moon in Valinor are referred to as the *Moriquendi*, meaning “Dark-Folk” in Quenya. One example of Tolkien’s Dark Elf is Legolas Greenleaf who,

although he is a good character with many positive qualities, is a descendant of those who did not make the journey and is, therefore, someone in spiritual darkness. Jenni Bergman offers another interpretation of Dark Elf identity. She claims that “Tolkien somehow wanted a character that could embody all that was negative about Elves that he otherwise celebrated, and the solution was to make this character a Dark-elf” (150). An example of Bergman’s argument is Eöl from *The Silmarillion* who was often called the Dark Elf. Eöl lives in the deep shadows of the forest, preferring night to day, and he learns metalworking from the dwarves. He crafts for himself a black set of armor, a physical connection to darkness. Finally, there is darkness in his heart: a sense of pride and greed which ultimately leads to him killing his family because they did not want to continue living with him. Here Tolkien begins to answer his questions by inventing Eöl, distinguished as a dark elf because of where he lives, his armor, and his evil actions. However, Tolkien’s interpretation of a dark elf is problematic because his version of the Dark Elf does not live underground, nor is Eöl substantially different in his characteristics from the traditional light elf. Although he prefers the night, he loves the nighttime sky and therefore still has that characteristic Elvish love of nature despite his different preferences. Eöl better describes a limited subversion of the traditional elf. The last fundamental difference between Snorri and Tolkien is how Tolkien only provides one Dark Elf, rather than a civilization. Thus, it is unclear if Eöl is the traditional Dark Elf or an exception. Although Tolkien is working towards solving this dark elf problem, what he produces does not synthesize with Snorri’s description of different elves and leaves the translation question unanswered.

The idea of dark elves inherently linked with evil further complicates Tolkien’s definition of Elves. Although he has a few Elves who are considered evil—individuals like Eöl or Fëanor—they are isolated examples. Evil elves do not maintain their elvishness and must be transformed

to have a new physical appearance to reflect better their morality. Nowhere is this evidence clearer than in the origin tales of the orcs: “Elves will have to become nameless and faceless Orcs to be properly evil, and have thus become different beings altogether: their acceptance of evil distorts their fair features into monstrous forms, and they are clearly no longer elves” (Bergman 211). When identified as a group (orcs), they are evil, and their physical appearance reflects their moral corruption, different than Eöl who represents an ambiguous Dark Elf because he is an isolated exception. The connection between a good moral alignment and physical appearance is highly correlated, suggesting that only good races can be physically beautiful. Bergman summarizes that “while the appearance of Elves is often rationalized to a few positive adjectives denoting beauty, nobility, and goodness, the character of the Dark-elf seems to offer a departure from this model and therefore requires closer scrutiny” (Bergman 141). Tolkien’s literary response has inspired new answers to this question with the introduction of the drow/dark elf which will be examined further in the following chapters through Salvatore “challeng[ing] the perception of elves that a reader of Tolkien might have” (Bergman 210). Rather than a spiritual difference, this shift reflects an attempt to contrast an Other to the traditional elf without consideration for the racial implications of this act.

Filling in the Research Gaps

While the current literature on elves focuses on tracing the historical progression of elven identities and understanding how these changes affected readers, there is a gap in the secondary literature on elves between Tolkien studies and digital literature; scholars discuss elves in Tolkien and digital narratives, but few discuss elves between these two foundational texts. In digital narratives, elves play a predominant role especially in Massive-Multiplayer-Online-Role-Playing-Games (MMORPGs). Where the scholarship is lacking in this growing area is in the

tabletop role-playing games that are the foundation for digital games, especially *D&D*. Authors, like Salvatore, write stories which help build on these worlds, permitting a more immersive experience, and expanding ways to read texts. This thesis' exploration of Salvatore's work, and by extension *D&D*'s, will help connect Tolkien scholarship to digital literature, bridging the gap between these two areas.

Research is lacking on Salvatore and *The Legend of Drizzt* with limited work published on him or his series. Salvatore and Drizzt are mentioned in passing in the footnotes of various articles and theses. One example is Bergman's thesis which is an ambitious project highlights the elves as a significant other from early Celtic and Anglo-Saxon influences until modern times. Although Bergman's thesis has strong opening chapters tracing the elves' literary history and three chapters on Tolkien's elves, her work is often dismissive of contemporary elves despite dedicating several chapters to them. One central flaw in her argument is that she does not see him as a heroic character, disregarding Salvatore's claims about who Drizzt is as a character but more importantly dismisses Drizzt's function and goals within the books. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to address the issues of hero and heroism in *The Legend of Drizzt*, it is problematic that Bergman misunderstands the primary material.

Another thesis which dedicates a fair amount of time to Drizzt and Salvatore is Aidan-Paul Canavan's thesis on the ideas of fantasy and mega-text. He selects three pulp fantasy authors, including Salvatore, whose work has "critical worth as illustrative of the genre's conventions, not their literary merit" (28). Canavan spends much time discussing how these conventions—character types, plot lines, and magic—work within Salvatore's writing. The value in studying Salvatore is seeing how these core concepts are subverted, inverted, and discarded which allows scholars to observe the cultural significance of these changes (25). Part of what

makes Salvatore interesting is how he “both conforms to the expectations and rules associated with an existing well known and detailed world, and at the same time subverts and undermines these ‘rules’ in some order to challenge the reader” (Canavan 35). The main subversion for this thesis is in the depiction of the drow and how they undergo only a limited subversion because they are still idealized. Canavan's work is important in how he examines different literary conventions and their implications in fantasy literature.

Thesis Limitations

This thesis has its limitations. Because of the elves' long cultural significance and their use to explore contemporary issues, they were selected as the focal point in Salvatore's work although there are other races which can grant insight into racial thinking, especially the orcs and goblins who Salvatore is particularly interested in. Further research can be done to compare several heroic and villainous races to see how racial identities influence, restrict, or liberate personal identities. With regards to the *D&D* section, this thesis focuses on first and fifth editions because they are the original and current editions of the game while other editions can provide insight into how the game has changed over time. Finally, Salvatore has written over thirty books for his Drizzt series, yet this thesis examines only some of them in general and fewer in detail, specifically his earlier writing. Further research might devote more time and space to how race is portrayed in the series and comparing the different races in detail.

Chapter Outlines

The first chapter traces the historical and cultural significance of the elves from Anglo-Saxon culture until Tolkien to explore the long cultural fascination with elves. Academics have extensively researched this field, and this chapter will outline the key shifts in the development towards contemporary elven identity with emphasis on the dark elves: from the Anglo-Saxon

ælfe as the otherworldly figure, to the fairies of medieval romances as a prize to valiant heroes, to the diminutive fairy in the Renaissance, culminating in the Victorian cultural phenomenon. This foundation is significant for Tolkien's Elves because he synthesized and contrasted various literary traditions, essential for understanding post-Tolkien elves. The chapter concludes with an in-depth examination of Tolkien's Elves as idealized versions of humanity so that they can be contrasted with Salvatore's drow in the third chapter.

The second chapter focuses on *D&D*'s influence in post-Tolkien fantasy to explore how popular culture affects racial representations. Examining the worldbuilding focus of contemporary fantasy literature provides the context of these games' successes. Players are also free to edit definitions or connotations to the stories of different races through gameplay and take an authorial role particular to the campaign they are playing in or with the group of players. This chapter examines how *D&D* represents race and how the game reinforces and subverts different creatures' representations through the game's characterization of the elves and the drow, as well as Salvatore's role in developing Gygax's drow. The game calls into question how players interact with different races and asks whether players simply continue to reinforce racial thinking or if there are opportunities for personal growth experiences.

The third chapter focuses on Salvatore's work within the two contexts outlined in the previous chapters: the cultural evolution of elven identity and the practical application of racial representation in *D&D*. This section will contrast Salvatore's drow with previous elven identities to determine the cultural influences affecting the current popularity and identity of elves and the consequences in our understanding of the elves, particularly through contrasting characters' racial and personal identities. Examining racial identities in the comparison of drow versus the traditional elf allows scholars to question race and the role of racism to explore how different

creatures guide our understandings of ourselves. Personal identity transcends racial identity, allowing for character contrast between Drizzt Do'Urden and his doppelgänger Artemis Entreri to explore new perspectives of reality. One of the central questions this chapter will address is Salvatore's claim that "fantasy is racist" and how he plays with this idea in his works ("Escapist" par. 6). The chapter compares Drizzt to his drow kin, the drow with the surface elves, and Drizzt with his human doppelgänger to explore how racial restrictions work within a typical fantasy world. These comparisons will establish the groundwork for further investigation into racial constructions, restrictions, and liberations within fantasy settings and will reveal how racial thoughts are expressed through popular culture.

Finally, there will be a brief concluding chapter summarizing the thesis and drawing further connections to other work on elves. The elves' high cultural value reveals how they help people figure out contemporary questions, especially the current inquiry surrounding why racial hierarchies are established and the flexibility to transition from heroes to villains regardless of the expected racial identity. Both popular and academic sources ask how fantasy is racist and why the genre has lacked racial progression within the last few decades. While other writers may have begun to address this problem, the issue needs to reach a wider audience. By focusing on the elf, this thesis explores people's long cultural fascination and the racial implications of Gygax's attempts to subvert the idealized race: they cannot be as despised as traditional villainous races like goblins and are still revered as worthy villains when some of their traits are subverted. These racial constructions stem from popular understandings of the world. To learn what it means to be an elf, or even a drow, first requires learning what it means to be human.

Chapter One: The Cultural Influence of the Elves in the Anglo-Saxon Culture, the Renaissance, Victorian England, and Tolkien's Writing

This chapter surveys the historical and cultural presence of the elves in Anglo-Saxon culture, the Renaissance, the Victorian era, and Tolkien to examine how the elves have developed. This investigation will provide the foundation to the second chapter which will explore the elves in *D&D*, leading to the third chapter which will examine racial representations in R.A. Salvatore's *The Legend of Drizzt* and the drow/dark elf characters. Elven representation reflects cultural thought because these creatures are "squeezed out at cultural pressure points" and make more literary appearances as these concerns come up (Buccola 201). Their representations suggest some of the concerns of a particular time. Bergman's thesis on the use of the elves is significant in arguing the "human-sized elf as a Significant Other...is in direct relation to humans while also situated beyond the boundaries of what is human, familiar, and 'same', and acts as a supernatural double that defines these boundaries" (iii). Elves serve as a contrast to humans, "an otherworldly double," allowing readers to understand themselves in comparison to the elves by asking who the elves are and what they represent (Bergman 1). While their appearance has changed, they identify the differences between human and Others (Bergman iii). This boundary begins with the ambivalent Anglo-Saxon elves whose popularity grew to engage with multiple aspects of everyday life. Medieval fairies served as vehicles for wish fulfillment, especially in romances. In the Renaissance, the elves/fairies were connected to sovereignty and served as a means for people to question how they should relate to spirits and other supernatural phenomena. The Victorian period's cultural fascination with fairies led to many opportunities for escapism from the responsibilities the Victorians faced. During this time, fairies gained their connection to children's literature through the butterfly-fairy type as well as

their association with sorrow and nostalgia. Tolkien aimed to return the elf to what he believed was their proper status, eliminating most of the fairy aspects combined with the elf over the years to give them a clear purpose: to provide perspective on death and immortality. Additionally, their status as a race parallel to humanity emphasizes their importance as role models for humanity. Understanding Tolkien's representation of Elves is essential for studying post-Tolkien elves, particularly the drow/dark elf who was designed to subvert traditional elven values. This exploration reveals the influence of popular culture and cultural assumptions about race.

Anglo-Saxon Culture

Scholars have observed how elves reflected cultural change in Anglo-Saxon culture, but determining their cultural significance remains difficult, and scholars can only make tentative conclusions about Anglo-Saxon beliefs. Ronald Hutton explains that it "is clear that elves were feared for maliciously afflicting humans and their animals but there are also strong hints that they were models of seductive female beauty" (1138). Elves were considered small and often invisible. These characteristics helped contribute to the idea of someone suffering from elf-shot, the elves shooting arrows at people to inflict them with diseases (Hall "Shot" 19). This association of elves and bows has continued to the present day, although typically without the disease connotation. The second elven identity Hutton describes is the temptress, more commonly attributed to the fairy mistress in medieval romances. By the ninth century, the term *ælfscyne* appeared which meant "paradigms of seductive female beauty" (Hall *England* 44). This term connects the elf to the monstrous, but the elves were not always considered evil as evidenced in the language. The Anglo-Saxon personal name *ælfwine*, for example, means "elf friend" (Hutton 1138). Having a friendly relationship with elves would be tough given Hutton's first definition of how these people viewed elves and thus reveals the contradictory views of the

time. These viewpoints are further contradicted when different cultures interacted with each other and exchanged their beliefs on who and what the elves were. For example, Hall highlights how

it has been traditional to characterize such ideas of *elves* [as] the product of post-Conquest Celtic literary influence, directly on Old French and Anglo-Norman literature and, indirectly through this, on English. These seductive female *elves* are implicitly contrasted in this view with an Anglo-Saxon (or ‘Germanic’) tradition of mischievous or demonic sprite-like *ælf*. (*England* 76)

Hall’s argument suggests that elven identities emerged from a mixture of cultures and resulted in often malleable identities. This flexibility allows authors to adapt whichever aspects best fit their stories. This malleability has allowed the popularity of the elves to progress over time as new identities emerge.

The elves’ interconnectedness with other creatures complicates scholarly attempts to separate these creatures. Keith Thomas argues that “ancestral spirits, ghosts, sleeping heroes, fertility spirits and pagan gods can all be discerned in the heterogeneous fairy lore of medieval England and modern inquiries into fairy origins can never be more than speculative” (607). Green agrees with Thomas, arguing that it is impossible to determine the difference between creatures and their characteristics and that “any attempt at a totalizing definition will prove illusory” (2). Despite the struggles to differentiate elves from fairies in this period, there seems to be one key distinction in terminology; Noel Williams argues that since its earliest origins and persisting through modern use, the word “fairy” has the central concept of “fatedness,” revealed in its Latin origin (457). Thomas Keightley argues that that Latin term *fatare*, derived from *fata* or *fatum*, also signified to enchant (6-8). Bergman defines this signifier as “a power that can be

very inexactly translated as magic, enchantment, or fate” (46). As a symbol of enchantment, the fairies became popular in medieval romances, and they slowly began to become distinguished from the elves. Furthermore, poetic uses of the words contributed to authors’ preferences to use the term “fairy” rather than “elf” due to rhythm and rhyme in poetry. Although the prominent term in the Middle Ages was “elf,” by the fifteenth century the term “fairy” “had already come to signify among the English, apparently in general, the beings that were known in their own language as elves” (Hutton 1145). While the popular term shifted from elf to fairy in the Renaissance, these terms merged and the term fairy “generally replaced ‘elf’ in common usage, while among poets and other literary writers it became a matter of personal preference” (Simpson 80). Scholars examining medieval elves and fairies in connection to their cultural significance must recognize their complexity that facilitates malleable representations.

Renaissance

In the sixteenth century, the elf/fairy figure became more prominent in literature and culture, and they became recognized as part of the world rather than belonging to a separate place (Bergman 65). Buccola argues that in the Renaissance, the fairies are “products of the human imagination...held accountable for human activities when, in reality, fairies are one imaginative means humans use to explore alternative lifestyle choices, domestic arrangements, and modes of conduct” (32). Fairies became a way to understand social rules and relationships, particularly for women, in negotiating socioeconomic change (Buccola). The belief in fairies in everyday life allowed them to be “scapegoats for problems in workplace, family, and household, and as ethereal lottery tickets, passports to vast sums of wealth” (Buccola 47). These creatures were similar to the medieval fairies, and their “attributes most often invoked in early modern drama and popular lore—both before and after Shakespeare—are the fairies’ small stature, their

mischievousness, their involvement in human love affairs, and their interaction with humans as brides, midwives, and changeling infants” (Buccola 32). These characteristics became standardized in Renaissance culture.

The fairy flourished during the Renaissance, becoming a staple in Renaissance culture. Hutton argues that from 1560-1640 fairy mythology was more significant in British culture than ever before (1147). One of the main reasons he cites for this interest is that the people were elaborating on the medieval fairy tradition and asking questions about how they should relate to supernatural creatures. Their inquiries were not just limited to elves/fairies, but they also questioned angels, demons, and ghosts to understand the nature of spirits (Hutton 1154). These questions continued to fuel their popularity.

Literature is a significant contribution to the fairies’ increasing popularity. Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen* is significant for its allegorizing of Queen Elizabeth I as the fairy queen. This text also helped the nomenclature shift from elf to fairy. The fairy is a flattering allegory for Elizabeth, representative of her expanding powers and beauty. Woodcock argues that Spenser made a “self-conscious commentary upon the whole process of using fairy to represent and celebrate the queen” (2). The fairy was symbolic of beauty, grace, and power. Like the legends of King Arthur, the motif of fairy mythology was “employed as a means of elevating, celebrating, and distinguishing an individual” (Woodcock 35). There are many tales and poems about King Arthur, and Queen Elizabeth also became a popular subject. Significant in the structure of fairyland is queenly sovereignty. Many of the theatrical and popular representations of fairyland had a queen with either sole sovereign authority or dominance over her partner (Buccola 71). The similarities with Queen Elizabeth helped people interpret the fairies as a symbol of power. After Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, “all distinction between the different

species was rapidly lost, and Fairies became the established name of the popular Elves” (Keightley 59).

Shakespeare is another author with significant influence in furthering fairy culture in Renaissance London by blending different traditions into one body of recognized fairy characteristics. Jessica Burke argues that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a key text for various aspects of fairy identity: “the roots of an ancient past ripe with goblins and imps, with untamed fairies that kidnap and cajole, lure and punish, to effervescent tree sprites all bedecked in cobwebs, dewdrops, insect wings, tulle, and sequins” (25). Shakespeare used fairies in many ways, showing the real fairy world in one play and using it as a cover for con artists in another. He drew from not only folk belief but also romance literature from the last few centuries (Nutt 32). By bringing together multiple ideas, mythologies, and stories, he helped create a new standard for understanding fairies. Shakespeare’s influence on popular fairy culture cannot be overstated, especially through *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Nutt argues that

scarce any one of Shakespeare's plays has had a literary influence so immediate, so widespread, and so enduring. As pictured by Shakespeare, the fairy realm became, almost at once, a convention of literature in which numberless poets sought inspiration and material. I need only mention Drayton, Ben Jonson, Herrick, Randolph, and Milton himself. Apart from any question of its relation to popular belief, of any grounding in popular fancy, Shakespeare's vision stood by itself, and was accepted as the ideal presentment of fairydom, which, for two centuries at least, has signified to the average Englishman of culture the world depicted in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. (31)

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare combines fairy traditions into one story, which contributes to its popularity and endurance. He combines Oberon and Tatiana from different

mythologies to be husband and wife, includes changelings, and has fairies bless marriages. The public would recognize different fairy mythologies and learn new ideas which expanded the general understanding of fairies. Shakespeare's popularity, both in his own time and afterward, had great influence on subsequent literature involving fairies.

Victorian Era

Although the elf/fairy figure did not disappear during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, scientific and philosophic thinking led to magical belief being driven underground after the sixteenth century which had "decisive influence upon the thinking of the intellectual elite and in due course percolated down to influence upon thought and behaviour of the people at large" (Green 643). Fairies, however, were revitalized in the nineteenth century. Scholars began to study the elf/fairy in an academic context, rather than just a popular one. Fairy fascination in the Romantics was not only due to the late eighteenth-century Shakespeare revival but also the development of folklore as an academic discipline (Fimi *Tolkien* 29). Alongside the study of folklore was the rising field of archeology, a study used to reclaim the past and "to rationalize the irrational, to explain the supernatural and belief in it [to] simultaneously explain the culture itself" (Carole Silver 4). The fairy helped people explore these differences and thus the Victorian period was a time of "cultural preoccupation with the secret kingdom of the fairies [and was] a hallmark of the era" (Carole Silver 3). Fimi's work discusses how the "Victorian fairies came to be associated with a reaction to modernity and industrialization and became a way of coping with the rejection of religion" ("Sing" 11). Unlike religion, people accepted fairy belief as something they could dabble in without committing themselves to believing in it. There were some relevant beliefs in fairies that reveal cultural anxieties such as the idea of the changeling, of a human baby being replaced by an ugly fairy baby. This belief put people more at ease when

they had children with diseases or disabilities—things they attributed to the mixing of races—and helped to relieve a sense of personal responsibility.

There were two main types of Victorian fairies: the carefree flower fairies and the sorrowful fairies, each capturing different aspects of Victorian culture. The people considered the “butterfly-like” fairies as the escapist type because these fairies tended to be more carefree and whimsical (Martinez 70). These fairies were “natural creatures living in forests and flowers and were viewed as magical creatures” (Brown 6). Fairies provided an escape from the Victorian era’s cultural anxieties which helped contribute to their popularity. Bergman argues that the “culmination of the popularity of the flower-fairy comes in the writings of J.M. Barrie,” particularly in the character of Tinker Bell (80). Peter Pan begs the audience to clap if they believe in fairies to bring her back to life, a scene which inherently relies on audience belief, or at least a willingness to suspend disbelief. *Peter Pan* created what Carole Silver calls a “fairy cult” designed around the idea of saving children, which the fairies were often equated to in this work (188). This type was prominent in art as well as literature, helping to satisfy the need to escape from the pressures of being societies’ leading figures.

The second type of fairy popularized during the Victorian era was what Brown describes as “often plaintive and sorrowful” (8). These fairies represented “yesterday, past glories, [and] lost worlds/times” (Brown 8). Brown describes how “many departed and vanished things, [and that] fairies are consistently associated with nostalgic yearnings for golden ages, times of stability and simplicity” (85). These fairies served as a reminder of the cost of progress, of accepting the responsibilities and obligations that came from being the beacon of civilization, so they also yearned for the golden ages free from responsibility. This attitude reflects a literary trend. Brown suggests that the “departure of the fairies is a tradition in itself, a genre of lament of

the passage of time and the loss of innocence. Fairies also belong to yesterday, because today's world is corrupt, sophisticated, urbane, and disenchanted" (Brown 163). These fairies are the matured version of the butterfly-type fairy who can no longer live in a world without magic or innocence, the reality with the rise of modernity. These fairies represent nostalgia for another world and Brown argues that whether the children believe in the fairies during these performances, "it is the adults who take them to the theatre who want them to clap their hands, in order to evoke for them a nostalgic remembrance of the childhood they have left behind for ever" (173). The idea of the fairies saying farewell has its repetitions in early literature, including Chaucer, as the world becomes increasingly disenchanted, and people seek out the fairies again to bring back a little magic.

Tolkien's Elves

The flourishing of the fairies seemed to end with the world wars, leaving a world where whimsical, carefree fairies could not exist amidst the tragedy. After WWI, fairies were not a popular literary theme due to the destruction of the war, leaving the elf/fairy to face not only another physical transformation but to gain new cultural meaning (Martinez 65). In other words, the "magic and wonder of the childhood world that the diminutive fairy previously represented became lost in a whiff of nostalgic glamour, and a new elf was needed for a new age" (Bergman 82). This new elf emerged in Lord Dunsany's 1924 novel *The King of Elfland's Daughter* which returned the human-sized elf to literature, although he occasionally calls his elves "fairies" in the first chapter (2). Lord Dunsany started shaping elven literature into its most common contemporary form which led Tolkien to "[re-establish] the elf character as a human-sized being, and therefore a Significant Other, in popular culture" (Bergman 99). The elves were not so much

a symbol of what was lost in human life but they were presented as an idealized alternative to human nature.

Tolkien not only standardized the contemporary version of the elves, but he popularized them. Despite all his creations, “one of the most original and memorable creations of J.R.R. Tolkien’s invented world of Middle-Earth is his awe-inspiring and sorrowful Elves” (Fimi “Sing” 10). Fimi’s language is significant here with her adjectival choice of “original” in describing the Elves.¹ The Elves are original not because Tolkien invented them, but because he created the foundation for most elves in contemporary fantasy. Tolkien was deliberate in his terminology. Early drafts of his work use the term fairies rather than elves, but he later decided to use elf. Tolkien tried to distinguish his Elves from fairies because he felt that fairies were more carefree and whimsical and that there were too many sexual connotations (especially with the increasing use of the word fairy to refer to homosexuality). Furthermore, their association with children from Victorian literature established an audience Tolkien did not have in mind for his work (Fimi “Sing” 59; Martinez 65). Aspects of the Victorian fairies remain and were relevant in early drafts. From his letters, scholars know that Tolkien was deeply moved by his viewing of *Peter Pan*, leading to the play’s lasting influence on his work. Fimi’s analysis of his early poetry and beginning drafts of his Middle-Earth tales featured the “flower-and-butterfly fairies and whimsical elves of the Victorian and Edwardian periods[;] the wistful undertones of the tradition of the departure of the fairies and the melancholy of the lost fairyland of *Peter Pan*, explain many recurring elements in Tolkien’s early poetry and in the first version of his

¹ Because Tolkien capitalized Elves in his works, any reference to his Elves will also be capitalized. Other elves will be denoted with a lower case e.

mythology” (“Sing” 39). The lost fairyland remains as the Elves’ Undying Lands as does the tradition of the Elves leaving the world.

Although Tolkien recrafted the Elves, he was not ultimately satisfied with the term “elf.” In one of his letters, he admits that he

now deeply regret[s] having used Elves, though this is a word in ancestry and original meaning suitable enough. But the disastrous debasement of this word, in which Shakespeare played an unforgivable part, has really overloaded it with regrettable tones, which are too much to overcome. (185)

Tolkien actively worked towards what he viewed as undoing the damage to elven identity that many authors had done. There were several authors with whom Tolkien had a “relationship of intense dislike” because he believed they had included something not quite right: Wagner, Shakespeare, Spenser, George MacDonald, and Hans Christian Anderson (*Shippey Road* 220). While shaping his Elves, Tolkien deliberately works against centuries of tradition and their “debasement.” This “debasement” includes the elves’ inconsistencies, diminished stature, and their reduction to being mischievous sidekicks. Dimitra Fimi argues that Tolkien “elevated his Elves to higher beings with semi-divine powers, [and] Tolkien eventually rejected the illustration of late-Victorian and Edwardian fairies, and turned to whatever was left of the ‘authentic’ English tradition: the Anglo-Saxon *ælf*e and their northern ‘cousins’ the Old Norse *álfar*” (Fimi *Tolkien* 195). Like the Greek *nymphs* and *dyrads* and the Norse *álfar*, Tolkien established his Elves in their originally semi-divine status, being less powerful than gods but greater than the average person; these creatures were also the Firstborn and are established as superior to other creatures. This elevation is clear in how Tolkien describes how the different races interact and the prominence the Elves have in his stories. What makes Tolkien’s elves distinct is “their

centrality. The Elves stand higher than all the other Middle-Earth creatures and right at the heart of Tolkien's *legendarium*," being the focus of his *The Silmarillion* (Fimi Tolkien 9). Even more significant than their centrality, his focus on the elves goes beyond superficial constructions to the creation of a fully developed culture, language, and history (Bergman 211). With the Elves at the heart of his work, they deserve special examination on what they meant to Tolkien, to Middle-Earth, and to readers.

One question Shippey raises is what motivated Tolkien to write his Elves the way he did. Because he set out to restore Elves to a purer state, "one of the starting points of his whole developed mythology was this problem of nomenclature, this apparent contradiction in ancient texts in particular, a problem made only more challenging by the groping attempts of earlier scholars to solve it" ("Elf Problem" 8). The problems Tolkien faced when integrating all the variations of elf included how writers presented the elves in often contradictory ways, how people translated the texts, and general inquiries about dark elves. To accomplish this task, Tolkien attempted

to recover the authentic tradition which lay further back than any account we possess, the tradition which gave rise to Snorri and *Beowulf* and the Eddic poems and the Anglo-Saxon charms, and all the other scraps of evidence, which however integrated, resolved their contradictions, and explained the nature of their misunderstandings. (Shippey "Elf Problem" 12)

He brought together hundreds of years of tradition, removed what he considered a fairy instead of an elf, and reshaped his Elves to fit not only his dramatic needs but to restore what he viewed as their proper identity.

Middle-Earth reflects Van Dyke's argument that fantasy literature is anthropocentric; Tolkien's work establishes racial differences between his fantasy races and connects his creatures with racial archetypes. Michael Tresca argues that Tolkien's fellowship creates these racial archetypes through his representations of the races: "Legolas embodied the typical elvish traits of archery and stealth, Gimli represented the raging dwarvish warrior, and Boromir was an analogue for humanity in all its selfishness and nobility" (23). Legolas and Gimli provide the main representations of who Elves and Dwarves are in *The Lord of the Rings*. By including two humans, Tolkien demonstrates the ambiguous moral alignment of human heroes, but with their tendency towards good; Boromir redeems himself despite his temptation by the Ring while Aragorn remains the hero who did not fall to temptation. Fantasy readers can easily accept humans as heroes or villains, but Tolkien presents them as more prone to be heroic since most humans featured in the novels are good characters.

Tolkien's reimagined Elves are not only good creatures, but they are humanity idealized. Gweneth Spry simplifies their identification by claiming that goodness is "epitomized by the Elves" (29). The "Elves identify themselves, and are identified by others, with the life of Middle-earth and see themselves as stewards and guardians of its beauty" (Dickerson 99). Their position in the world places them as "the highest form of aesthetic valuation of the natural order" (Dickerson 117). They care for the lands to preserve the memory of the Undying Lands. Overall, people equate Elves with goodness: they are wise, beautiful creatures who stand in contrast to the orcs, reflections of themselves corrupted. Despite all their admirable qualities, the Elves still have weaknesses. Saler identifies their main weakness: "as immortals, they resent temporal change and want to preserve the status quo: a form of possessiveness" (185). This possessiveness is seen in *The Silmarillion* when Fëanor seeks vengeance against Melkor and anyone who

intends to keep the Silmarils away from them, even if they were the Valar. Despite their flaws, they model an idealized lifestyle. Through his Elves, Tolkien “presents the nature of good as associated with the qualities of beauty, light, brightness and white. But through the Elves’ powers of healing and their great love of nature and the land, Tolkien suggests that good inheres in these properties as well” (Spry 67-68). Tolkien provides an achievable model for a better way of living. Tolkien intended his Elves to be read as a race parallel to humans. Tolkien claimed that “Middle-Earth is not an imaginary world...The theatre of [this] tale is this earth, the one in which we now live, but the historical period is imaginary” (239). He encourages readers to consider his writing as real, as part of our world despite the fantastic creatures and magical displays. The Elves are how he communicates his central message. In his letters, he describes how the Elves are

represented as a race similar in appearance (and more so further back) to Men, and in the former days of the same stature...these histories [are] very little akin to the Elves and Fairies of Europe; and if I were pressed to rationalize, I should say that they represent really Man with greatly enhanced aesthetic and creative faculties, greater beauty and longer life, and the nobility of the Elder Children, doomed to fade before the Followers (Men), and to live ultimately only by the thin line of their blood that was mingled with that of Men, among whom it was the only real claim to ‘nobility.’ (176)

With some speculations on Elves’ ears and height, the Elves are almost human. The differences enhance other qualities with cultural value: aesthetics, creativity, beauty, longevity, and nobility. They easily become the Significant Other Bergman describes, the parallel race which we can aspire to become. Tolkien’s reference to how their histories are different from the elf/fairy histories, outlined earlier in this chapter, emphasizes his desire to separate his “real” Elves from

their mangled literary predecessors. With the last few lines of this quotation, Tolkien emphasizes that although the Elves are idealized, humans can surpass the Elves, who are “doomed to fade.” Although his works feature humans through the race of Men, the contrasts Tolkien wants to make is better established through his Elves. In another letter, Tolkien explains that

Elves and Men are represented as biologically akin in this ‘history’ because Elves are certain aspects of Men and their talents and desires, incarnated in my little world. They have certain freedoms and powers we should like to have, and the beauty and peril and sorrow of the possession of these things are exhibited in them. (189)

His Elves encompass human ideals to reveal the costs of their perspectives: when they live almost forever, their sorrow remains. His repetitiveness in his letters about who and what the Elves are suggests how central they were to his created world and how he wanted to ensure that his readers understood them correctly.

As a Christian writer concerned with the world around him, one of Tolkien’s primary writing concerns is about “Death and the desire for deathlessness” (Tolkien 262). The Elves gave him an opportunity to provide a new perspective on what death means, especially to creatures who cannot easily die and who perhaps secretly desire death. Many early readers, including C.S. Lewis, considered the theme of power—especially in the seeming allegory of atomic weapons in the One Ring—as central to the text. Tolkien argues that the “real theme for [him] is about something much more permanent and difficult [than power and domination]: Death and Immortality: the mystery of the love of the world in the hearts of a race ‘doomed;’ to leave and seemingly lose it; the anguish in the hearts of a race ‘doomed’ to not leave it, until its whole evil-aroused story is complete” (Tolkien *Letters* 246). He explores death and immortality by creating

a race who rarely die to provide a contrast; this perception is at the heart of his writings Tolkien explains the difference between Elves and humans best:

Elves and Men are just different aspects of the Humans...In this mythological world, the Elves and Men are in their incarnate forms kindred, but in relation to their 'spirits' to the world in time represent different 'experiments,' each of which has its own natural trend and weakness. (236)

Tolkien elevates his Elves above humans in all the ways to see how their perspective on death changes. While elves have been used before to discuss big life questions, Tolkien offers a new cultural meaning. This idea reflects Fimi's work as she claims that Tolkien

approached the theme of death from a different angle by writing from the viewpoint of beings that are tied to the world and do not leave it. In this sense the centrality of the Elves is self-explanatory: they are an integral part of Tolkien's 'sub-creative' effort, indissolubly linked with his philosophical and theological pursuits. Elves are the main agents of his thoughts and ideas on death and immortality, and provide a sharp contrast to how Men view such matters. (Tolkien 10)

This contrast invites readers to consider the differences between Elven and human perspectives. In a world recovering from the terrors and overwhelming death of two World Wars, readers were attracted to such readings and, through Tolkien, the elves were revitalized again.

Conclusion

Anglo-Saxon culture, the Renaissance, the Victorian era, and Tolkien's writing have reimagined and explored the cultural significance of the elves to create new identities and revealed changing cultural concerns. In each period, the elves were a Significant Other for humans and thus held a special place in literature as a means to explore what it meant to be

human. Although race was not a key exploration of elf/fairy/human identity in these periods, they allowed the exploration of other cultural concerns: gender, socioeconomic change, or a nostalgic longing for simpler times. These creatures were a means to examine cultural anxieties, to understand human relationships and change, as well as what it means to be human.

Chapter Two: Fantasy's Worldbuilding, the Creation of *Dungeons and Dragons*, and Writing the Drow

The first chapter explored the historical, literary, and cultural history of elves from Anglo-Saxon culture until Tolkien. This chapter examines new elven identities through the table-top roleplaying game *Dungeons and Dragons* (*D&D*). Dynamic reader engagement leads to new understandings of how to approach fantasy literature, creates opportunities to expand on stories or worlds, and permits readers to take on authorship roles. With the elves' clear importance in the game, it is necessary to delve into who and what the dark elves are. Surprisingly, there is a notable gap in research on the dark elves, only recently being explored by scholars such as Shippey, but no one has yet focused on the influence of *D&D* on elven identities. This thesis will explore not only the influence this game has on popular culture and contemporary constructions of elves but also the new perspectives it offers. The chapter begins by examining how the fantasy genre has shifted from writing individual stories to focus on worldbuilding and readers' interactions with texts. A focus on worldbuilding and people's acceptance of the genre in academic and popular circles encourages readers to become writers. With Tolkien's standardization of fantastic creatures, not limited to just Elves, he consequently standardized a system of racial meanings, continuing fantasy's association with racism. *D&D* is one example of a living text, encouraging a worldbuilding emphasis. *D&D*'s elves follow Tolkien's model except for the drow who were designed to subvert the idealized surface elves. *D&D*'s ludic elements—the game construction and rules—can restrict players' experiences for exploring the role and influence of race, but personal growth experiences are possible for players under the right circumstances.

Tolkien and Worldbuilding

Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of Tolkien's writings was showing what the fantasy genre is capable of through worldbuilding. His concern with fantastic races' various cultures provided more depth to a world that readers continue to explore. Middle-Earth is more than a collection of narratives located in a place, but an inspiration for people to create their tales. Middle-Earth may have begun as a place for Tolkien to question the problem of death and immortality, but the world he created allows for so much more than the explanation of one philosophical question. Likewise, *D&D*'s world encourages people to play out alternative scenarios for real-life struggles. By focusing on worldbuilding rather than individual stories, there is greater potential for new narratives, ones not limited to the original author but open to readers as well, to tell tales previously untold (Ward 4). Although there may have originally been one central author, fans can contribute to this work on personal and global levels. As readers gain a co-authorship through engaging in role-playing games, they further enhance the worlds they interact with by adding more stories and further developing the world.

Beyond its worldbuilding focus, Tolkien's publications "radically changed the position of fantasy" from stories to the ability to create entire worlds and establish the seriousness of the genre (Attebery *Tradition* 154). Not only did Tolkien's work influence what would "become staples of the fantasy genre, such as our conceptions of magic, elves, dwarves, orcs, and so on...[but] what's more critical, though, is Tolkien's obsessive attention to detail: he didn't just write novels; rather, he spent a lifetime creating a new world" (Barton 18). His influence is so substantial that without Tolkien's work, the fantasy genre could not be where it is today (Shippey *Author* xviii). Péter Makai agrees with Shippey: "without a shadow of a doubt, J.R.R. Tolkien single-handedly revolutionized (if not created) the genre of fantasy" (35). With the dramatic shift

in fantasy before and after Tolkien's novels came the recognition that readers can take this genre seriously. The increasing popularity of fantasy literature not only led to an increase in books but inspired tabletop role-playing games which continue in contemporary gaming. Brenda Silver argues that there is a direct line from *D&D* back to Tolkien "and the fantasy genre as a whole" (202). Contemporary fantasy literature is increasingly focusing on worldbuilding, more than individual stories, allowing for multiple authors/readers to interact together to explore not only an author-intended but a personal narrative. An example of this type of building can be seen in Salvatore's writings. Wizards of the Coast gave him part of the world to bring to life through his characters and stories. These plot points and characters are featured in *D&D* game guides, materials designed to help players create their own game world. These characters can make appearances within the games since all the necessary statistics and background information are included in *D&D*'s manuals. Thus, these characters demonstrate a use beyond Salvatore's initial creation as they are used in new narratives. From tabletop roleplaying games, this new narrative style expanded to MMORPGs, with computer algorithms speeding up players rolling dice. Matt Barton argues that claiming "that the works of J.R.R. Tolkien have influenced the [computer role-playing game genre] is akin to saying the Big Bang influenced the universe" (202). Both Tolkien and *D&D* share a common focus on building a world, giving fantasy its prominent position in contemporary Western society.

Tolkien's focus on establishing a detailed world for his stories allows for readers to actively engage in the world and shift part of the world's function. The world is not merely a setting, some attempt at an exotic new place to have something new, but can be considered a character. Barton argues that "the Tolkien phenomenon paved the way for a new type of game, one that would allow fans to go beyond reading and actually enter exciting worlds of fantasy to

play a role in their own adventures” (19). This emphasis on worldbuilding is important to study as it follows Fimi’s advice to scholars “to incorporate Tolkien’s work into broader movements and trends in literature” (Tolkien 202). While many scholars have focused on MMORPGs, many have skipped over the fundamental connection: the tabletop roleplaying game, particularly *D&D*. This thesis approaches that fundamental step in-between the two dominant scholarly texts, exploring that direct line Brenda Silver describes.

Character Archetypes

Deeper insight into character archetypes may reveal some of the limitations in fantasy and gaming. Vladimir Propp argues that in fairy tales, a genre as formulaic as fantasy, there are seven character archetypes who can perform thirty-one functions in a narrative. The seven archetypes include the hero, villain, donor, helper, princess/sought out person, dispatcher, and false hero, all familiar character types within *D&D*. The hero is the group of players who encounter these other types as they progress through the narrative, forming a collective rather than individual hero. Within the group, character attributes are assigned to different heroes’ functions depending on their race or class: the thief is usually small, quiet, and often helps the group break into places while the elf is usually diplomatic and whose keen eyes make him or her an asset in scouting locations. Although these are the typical associations, players are free to experiment in character creation and to work against these standard types. Despite the freedom the players have to experiment, they generally conform to the common expected result from an encounter. A party seeks a quest and finds the dispatcher, who rewards the group with loot or experience, who can become the donor, or who betrays the group and delays the completion of the new quest. These rules are flexible, as Propp argues, with characters becoming part of multiple roles or several characters fulfilling the same role. If players slavishly follow the

intentions of the archetypes, there is less opportunity for character development which may explain why some of these archetypes are so dominant in fantasy fiction; these archetypes are part of the formula and continue to serve their functions.

During a campaign, characters experience various aspects of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey depending on the story arcs. Not all aspects are used in any given campaign, but it is more common for the hero to consider characters acting as obstacles rather than villains. This consideration drives much of how the heroes resolve conflict, especially since the game's ludic elements encourage killing villains for the experience and the loot. *D&D* typically follows the "warrior-type" hero, aligning with the game's combat focus with heroes who often treat any other races who stand in their way as the enemy. Propp and Campbell's work provides the default interactions between characters that have been overall consistent since *D&D*'s release.

Tolkien and Race

Tolkien establishes contemporary fantasy representations. With this standardization, many critics—scholarly and popular—question some of the choices Tolkien made about race. It is easy to initially judge the obvious physical, mental, and moral differences among the races and to claim that Tolkien's works were racist in his racial representations. Stephen Shapiro is one critic who claims that Tolkien's work is racist because "Tolkien's good guys are white and the bad guys are black, slant-eyed, unattractive, inarticulate and a psychologically undeveloped horde" (par. 4). This contrast is especially problematic with the fair, beautiful, wise elves who seem to be everything the orcs are not. More critics, however, claim that arguments that Tolkien is racist are more complicated than they seem. Young argues that fantasy works relying on European cultural references, lacking multicultural human societies, are not synonymous with racism ("Diversity" 352). She cites the historical contexts and writings which inspired Tolkien,

which themselves are racially limited. It is not necessarily enough, however, to ignore these claims about the writing as products of their time but requires deeper exploration. What helps to counterbalance the historical framework behind Tolkien is how racial diversity allows groups to work together towards success, even if the humans are not as ethnically varied as people would like. Success in *The Lord of the Rings* relies on the fellowship's diversity; their "racial and cultural differences complement each other, and the traits and abilities of each group contribute to eventual victory over evil" (Young "Diversity" 354). One group of elves, humans, or even hobbits would not have led to the destruction of the Ring, and as the group travels, their ideas about racial relations change. The most prominent example is the diluting tension between Elves and Dwarves with the growing friendship between Legolas and Gimli because they have had to work together to aid the Ring's destruction which left few opportunities to foster old hatreds. Tolkien's focus on all the virtuous races coming together to achieve a seemingly impossible task draws attention to the need for group work among all races.

The second reason it is difficult to examine claims of racism in Tolkien's work is that the creatures' representations were less a racial issue rather than a spiritual question. Brian Attebery argues that unlike science fiction, fantasy's relationship with races is "not so much biological as theological" ("Introduction" 335). Tolkien's central concern with death and immortality in his writing reflects this idea. The orcs were associated with darkness because they were aligned with evil, not because they were inherently evil (Rearick 870). These associations with darkness stem from biblical images and Tolkien's Judeo-Christian mindset, exploring a spiritual battle of good and evil (Rearick 870). It was not until Jackson's movies that *The Lord of the Rings* became subject to "pop culture scrutiny, especially among contemporary cultural critics concerned with the racist heritage of Western—and especially American—culture" (Rearick 863). These

concerns are connected to Tolkienesque works, including *D&D*, who face the same accusations. Basing races on spiritual explorations is a fascinating interpretation, but limits the races into good or evil binaries with little room for moral mobility.

The problem of trying to eliminate racial hierarchies in fantastic worlds requires not just creativity, but cultural change. Michael Omi argues that

concepts of race and racial images are both overt and implicit within popular culture—the organization of cultural production, the products themselves, and the manner in which they are consumed are deeply structured by race. Particular racial meanings, stereotypes, and myths can change, but in the presence of a *system* of racial meanings and stereotypes, racial ideology seems to be an enduring aspect of American popular culture. (121, emphasis in original)

While people have moved beyond many stereotypes, more remain, especially within fantasy worlds where different creatures usually conform to expected racial identities. The thoughts themselves do not matter, but the lingering conditioned thinking is what Omi finds so problematic and will not be an easy change; changing orcs to heroes and elves to villains does not solve the fundamental problem that racial systems of thinking are present in the everyday mind. Understanding racial ideology is difficult because of the complexities of distinguishing what people actually believe from what they claim they believe. Because fantasy literature and popular culture are intermixed, “fantasy literature can represent or address the racial attitudes of its audience and reveal accurate understandings of how race is viewed in contemporary culture,” thoughts often buried beneath the metaphors in the fantastic (Lavender 190). These metaphors hide the difficult truths people do not want to acknowledge, that people believe that they have surpassed racist thinking and it is extremely difficult to change how one thinks.

Part of the problem that preserves racial hierarchies in fantastic literature is Tolkien's argument that Secondary Worlds must "practice that 'inner consistency of reality'" (*Fairy* 60).² Anything is possible if the world follows its laws. Theoretically, it should be easy to build worlds with little emphasis on racial difference, but "imagined worlds are not unlike our own, are not better at 'doing' race, or at being inclusive of difference more generally" (Young *Race* 191). Race and racial difference are ingrained in society, making it is difficult to imagine worlds without these signifiers and that "creating a new world that alters such a significant aspect of society and culture is no easy task no matter what one's identity" (Young *Race* 191). Racial hierarchy and thinking are so embedded in society that it is almost impossible to create a world without them. This consistency shows how situated the fantasy genre is in what Young calls "its habits of Whiteness" (*Race* 191). Tolkien helped establish these racial habits because he—like Lovecraft, Howard, and Lewis—"drew heavily on European myths, literature, and history for imagination, and who populated their worlds largely with White protagonists" (Young *Race* 11). Because these defining authors drew their inspiration from other time periods, it is easy for the time's characteristics to slip into the authors' works and explains the abundance of white protagonists in subsequent fantastic literature. The capturing of different historical moments often leads to further reinforcement of racial attitudes. The problem then becomes the lack of action in questioning racial attitudes. It is easy to say Tolkien was racist because of how he represented his orcs, but that is not enough for trying to advance contemporary representations. Authors either need to try to structure a world without racial considerations entirely or work through their texts to reconcile these differences.

² Because Tolkien capitalizes his terms for Secondary World (a world which has no connection to our own), any reference to his idea will follow his capitalization.

Dungeons and Dragons

One example of focusing on fantasy worldbuilding is in *Dungeons and Dragons*, a table-top roleplaying game created in 1974 by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson who were inspired by table-top wargames and decided to create a heroic fantasy game centered around storytelling. Mackay defines a roleplaying game as “an *episodic* and *participatory* story creation *system* that includes a set of quantified *rules* that assist a group of *players* and a *gamemaster* in determining how their fictional *characters*’ spontaneous interactions are resolved” (4-5, emphasis in original). Players create characters and immerse themselves in a story. Roleplaying consists of descriptive roleplaying—describing what a character is doing—and active roleplay—a more immersive roleplaying style such as speaking in the character’s voice (Mearls and Crawford 186). The game runs through a combination of adding ability scores and rolling dice. The game follows a basic pattern: the Dungeon Master (DM) describes the environment, players describe what they want to do, and then the DM narrates the results of their actions (Mearls and Crawford 181). This narrative-driven game has three additional aspects: exploration, social interaction, and combat (Mearls and Crawford 8). Exploration is open, from exploring the world the characters are in, to pulling a lever to reveal a secret door. Social interaction is not just between the players, but between characters and non-player characters (NPCs). Finally, combat is the battling between characters and monsters, with the results determined by die rolling and is the main source for experience and leveling. These three core elements are variable depending on the type of group that is playing the game at any given time. Ultimately, the group tells a story and “D&D gives structure to the stories, a way of determining the consequences of the adventurers’ action” (Mearls and Crawford 5). *D&D* is a worldbuilding adventure. Players and the DM create a world through language and representative pieces on a map to aid in visualizing combat. DMs have

options to explore campaign worlds created by game designers, such as *The Forgotten Realms*, or they can use their own. Mearls describes how fans easily made the transition from reading Tolkien's fantasy to desiring a deeper role in it because they grew

tired of merely reading tales about worlds of magic, monsters, and adventure. They wanted to play in those worlds, rather than observe them. That [Gygax and Arneson] went on to invent DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS, and thereby ignite a revolution in gaming that continues to this day, speaks to two things. First, it speaks to their ingenuity and genius in figuring out that games were the perfect way to explore worlds that could not otherwise exist. Almost every modern game, whether played on a digital device or a tabletop, owes some debt to D&D. Second, it is a testament to the inherent appeal of the game they created. DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS sparked a thriving global phenomenon. (4)

Although Gygax and Arneson were not the first people to combine fantasy worlds and tabletop games, they were the first to popularize this combination as the game remains one of the best-selling and most popular tabletop roleplaying games. Mearls' claim about modern games being indebted to *D&D* is true as it standardized roleplaying games. When taking video games into consideration, this type of game Mearls describes is the global phenomenon which changed many notions of play and the potential of these stories.

For fans to immerse themselves in their favorite worlds and to be part of the stories rather than just receiving them, they often transition from reader to writer. The focus on worldbuilding provides readers with opportunities to become authors themselves, changing how the genre flourishes. While other genres also provide occasions for readers to become writers, it is more common in fantasy. Part of this difference stems from wanting to read a certain type of book.

Tolkien describes in a letter that he was “always looking for something I can’t find...Something like what I wrote myself” (*Letters* 378). When readers become dissatisfied with what is available to them, they create their own work. This pattern repeated itself with Salvatore who describes how *The Lord of the Rings* had “relevance” for him, especially in comparison to what he had to read in school and disliked: *Silas Marner* and *Moby Dick* (“Lightspeed” par. 5). When introduced to fantasy, he read what interested him, “and when [he] ran out of fantasy books...[he] wrote [his] own” (“Lightspeed” par. 5). Like Tolkien, Salvatore wanted to read a type of fantasy book which was unavailable to him and thus inspired him to write.

Isolating the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and horror, Ward argues that “these genres are particularly wide-ranging and emphasize the possibilities of worldbuilding, making them good sources for multi-media franchises” (2). *D&D* began as a table-top roleplaying game but has expanded into board games, books, video games, and more. Especially prominent in fantasy, “worldbuilding has taken over in many contexts because it allows flexibility in the kind of finished product that it produced as well as the potential to make other connected products” (Ward 22). *D&D* inspired authors, including Salvatore, to write stories within the context of the world the game designers created who then have branched out to have characters from these novels featured in popular video games, such as *Balder’s Gate*. Salvatore was hired to write stories which occurred within the game’s world to help foster interest in the game setting, but he was given the flexibility to create whatever he wanted within their guidelines. Thus, both narrative and game intermingle for further world exploration. Worldbuilding serves as “the basis for the tabletop role-playing game and...the tabletop role-playing game industry as a whole developed from the desire of fans to have a standardized approach to interacting with worlds that

they valued” (Ward 45). Ultimately these games provide the opportunity for fans to explore the worlds of their favorite stories.

D&D itself is an expression of popular culture distilled into one world. Pulp fiction greatly inspired Gygas, including Robert E. Howard’s stories about Conan the Barbarian or H.P. Lovecraft’s *The Call of Cthulhu* (“Onering” par. 4). Conan, for example, provides the template for the barbarian class: a melee warrior who relies on his strength and endurance to hit hard and take many hits in return. Perhaps more identifiable is the strong influence of Tolkien’s works. Gygas asked “who can doubt the excellence of Tolkien’s writing? So of course it had a strong influence on (Advanced Dungeons and Dragons and Dungeons and Dragons) games” (“OneRing” par. 6). This comment may be true in his eyes, but the game likely incorporated much of Tolkien’s work not because of the writing but because having all those references would help draw people who loved Tolkien into his game. Gygas contradicts himself four years later by claiming that Tolkien did not have “much [influence] although he certainly assisted in popularizing [the game] because I did put Tolkien-esque things in there” (Gygas “GameSpy” par. 10). He argues that he had many “Tolkien-esque things” because he hoped to profit from the intertextuality. This attempt to distance himself from Tolkien may stem from legal issues Gygas faced. He explains that at the time

just about all the players were huge JRRT fans, and they insisted that I put as much Tolkien-influence material into the game as possible. Anyone reading this [interview] recalls the original D&D game will know that there were Balrogs, Ents, and Hobbits in it. Later those were removed, and now non-JRRT things substituted—Balor demons, Treants, and Halflings. (Gygas “OneRing” par. 5)

These creatures had to undergo a name change because Gygax faced copyright infringement from the Tolkien estate. Hobbits became halflings, yet they still maintained their characteristics, so the only change was the name. His attempts to define Tolkien's creations as merely "Tolkien-esque" is an understatement as they are still identical to Tolkien's originals. They remain because of popular demand for them and because of Tolkien's racial standardization. Tolkien is not the only author Gygax and Arneson drew inspiration from as other creatures are also prominent. Therefore, Tolkien's Elves can live in the same world as Cthulhu monsters within the cultural mosaic *D&D* creates. Although Tolkien's work may have been a more significant resource than others, there are many sources which also contributed to the game. The significance of *D&D* is how it is "an articulation of fantasy conventions and its use as a codified framework of convention drawn from established canonical fantasy" (Canavan 57). By drawing from all the sources players would have wanted in one game, *D&D* adhered to the character tropes and narrative conventions familiar to and desired by its audience.

D&D is an important introduction to popular culture, and the game is significant to examine the historical context that it developed from. *D&D* was not just a game to many players, but something that connected to their other interests: war games, fantasy/science fiction movies, and reading Tolkien, Howard, Herbert, and Asimov (Mackay 16). The game provided the opportunity to explore the worlds of these authors and roleplaying games were often based on literature; these worlds became the generic model and "became the very thing that the role-playing game intended to simulate" (Mackay 17). What shifted in popular culture was a rapidly growing interest in fantasy after the success of *Star Wars* in 1977. This movie revolutionized what was possible in cinema and established a baseline for more of what people wanted to see. What also helped contribute to the growing popularity of the genre was the "ideological context"

in the fantasy films from the 1970s-1980s (Mackay 21; Warnes; Walden). The world was becoming an increasingly complicated place with the American sociopolitical climate after the Vietnam War and Watergate, as well as the postcolonial atrocities of Khmer Rouge in Cambodia (Mackay). This environment led to a “nostalgic longing for a time before the aggravating cultural, political, and economic ambiguities,” to a time with clearer distinctions between good and evil (Mackay 21). Early fantasy helped simplify these distinctions between good and evil, permitting a bit of escapism to a culture seeking relief from the events in the world around it. Because of the simple division between good and evil, rigid binaries between heroes and villains quickly developed and the villains became increasingly marginalized, monstrous, and racialized. These early distinctions influence how players interacted with monsters in early gaming: just kill them.

Ludic Elements Reinforcing Racial Thinking

D&D provides limitless opportunities for telling new stories and exploring racial questions, but the game’s structure—what is written in the core rulebooks and not what players may choose to do for campaigns—contains ludic elements which reinforce racial thinking. Young argues that the games “reproduced and intensified” racial thinking because of how players progress through the game (“Racial” 350). One example is the limits race has on character creation: “race determines not only appearance and ability but also moral capacity and purpose because of the ways the narratives of the games frame their actions; ludic and narrative elements combine to reinforce racial logics” (Young “Racial” 353). Beyond telling stories, the game’s goal is to maximize a character’s level, possible through quest completion but primarily through killing monsters. While lower levels tend to focus on beasts—wolves, bears, and similar creatures—many early opponents also include goblins and orcs. DMs have plentiful options for

players' opponents, although the abundance of evil creatures likely encourages DMs to continue with these expectations. Through the progression of killing more powerful monsters, the heroes become stronger. Thus, as Nathan Shank claims, "D&D narrative arises collectively from the players who intuitively enact structural forms of violence" (195). There are certain expectations of how this violence will play itself out. In a situation where goblins raid a village, players may try a diplomatic solution, which may be successful or impossible depending on how the DM presents the goblins and how the players intend to solve the problem. The expectation would be to kill the goblins and, because of how the books describe goblins, diplomatic solutions are improbable and a fight likely inevitable because that violent reaction is the expectation in most fantasy. Violence is the result of a simplified version of distinguishing good and evil and is usually acted on immediately. Although it is possible depending on the players' mindset to have games where there is more freedom to explore racial identities, limitations, and the potential to transcend these expectations, it is difficult given the game's setup and less likely to occur.

Despite the game's intended structure, the game does not eliminate the possibility for players' personal growth experiences with racial thinking depending on how DMs represent different creatures and the kinds of interactions they permit. The way players interact with the world is central to the game and is up to the players and the DM. The possibilities of game styles and interactions are endless, including ones allowing liberation from racial thinking. The rulebooks, after all, are guidelines and do not have to be taken as absolute. The rulebooks include that

it is still *your campaign*. You should never limit your creativity to what the book says—any book... You don't have to use the material exactly as it stands. You can and should change things you don't like, incorporate elements you like from other campaigns or

adventures, and put your own distinct stamp on the world. (Wyatt 133, emphasis in original)

Although discussing campaign stories, these words can also apply to the rules, especially ones regarding world building. There is great potential for personal growth experiences, but they are difficult to accomplish without deliberate exploration from the entire group.

Fan Responses to *D&D* and Salvatore for Combatting Racism

Scholars are not the only ones who recognize the problems with racism in *D&D* and *The Legend of Drizzt*. Ludic elements do encourage a certain player mindset, as this chapter explored earlier, and quinn describes some common thinking that players experience during *D&D*: “I don’t kill elves because they are good, but I kill kobolds because they are evil. Kobolds give me XP, and possibly loot” (par. 14). Technically, killing elves would also give experience and loot, but it is the players’ understanding of alignment which motivates the decision on who is killed and they are rewarded if they kill the right kinds of creatures. quinn, unlike most *D&D* players, is someone who has taken these thoughts further and applied *D&D* logic in the real world:

The kobolds are evil from birth and when you see one, it is probably going to be attacking you and you are OK to slay it. It’s a convenience, and it’s a reason I grow more and more disenchanted with it. I’ll be honest and say when I think of this I think about my own life as an African-American and how many times I am pre-judged to be, be all these threatening things when I am really just a nerd trying to raise a kid and be a good employee, father, and husband...and all of a sudden I feel bad for the kobold. It’s not that being a kobold has anything to do with being black; it’s that in both of these cases we are told this is who we are by societies and people know nothing about us as individuals. It’s frustrating sometimes. (par. 17)

The problem quinn highlights is the strength of cultural reinforcement of good and evil based on race and what is perhaps even more troubling is how the kobolds believe what their place is in the world based on how other races interact with them. The question of nature versus nurture is especially important here as this distinction influences what the kobolds' future could look like if progress could be made to redeem them. If their alignment reflects their nature and they could not be cultured, then continued action against them is a necessary reaction to protect the good races. If, however, the kobolds can be redeemed, then continued violence against them is no different from quinn's comparison of kobolds with African-Americans. When players, like quinn, make these kinds of connections, they "*just can no longer go back to the hordes of evil races that I can kill without guilt. It's just too real for me and not fun*" (quinn par. 21, emphasis in original). By applying real-world comparisons on fantasy racial thinking, suddenly the game changes and violence against other races has lasting consequences.

This thesis has focused on the ways racial thinking affects how people think about fantasy races, but players are currently concerned with the directly applicable forms of racism in *D&D*. Some people question the ethics of cosplaying, especially for drow with the use of blackface. The main request players have is for the game manuals to incorporate more cultural diversity in the artwork as the ethnicity shown is mainly white people with few cultural cues reflecting greater diversity. Mordicai Knode argues that greater racial diversity may lead to people wanting to play the game because they see themselves reflected in the books and that to suspend disbelief to have more diversity is as easy as believing in "a lizard lady or a devil dude" (par. 7). By first addressing these issues, players can then tackle the subtle racial influences on which this thesis has focused.

Salvatore's work has been more influential on individual rather than global levels as people have found ways to connect with Drizzt's struggles. MasqueofComus describes the racism he faced from his community in childhood and particularly after 9/11. Salvatore's works "were a way for me to cope with racism...Funny enough, Drizzt helped me not hate myself for my skin color" (MasqueofComus). Salvatore can be a way for some readers to overcome their identity struggles and work through these issues alongside Drizzt. This type of response is common, particularly among younger audiences, in posts and forums on the topic. These types of experiences are on a personal level, rather than a global one, but are still important in transforming the perspectives of individuals, allowing them to embrace their identities. Reactions towards the racial representations in Salvatore's novels are generally positive; readers enjoy that the protagonist is an outsider, and they like the exploration of unusual situations. The establishment of an orc kingdom and an extended time of peace, albeit strained, is rare in fantasy works. Some complaints rise during *The Transitions*, when *D&D* was moving from fourth edition to fifth edition. Catti-brie's tells that Mielikki's teaching includes the belief that all goblin are unredeemable evil and that genocide is the proper course of action (*Night* 40). SSJMewzard describes his reading of this moment as "moral whiplash" as it works against Drizzt's earlier message (par. 7). Drizzt struggles with this declaration because he is a follower of Mielikki, leading to a future exploration of religious influence on the establishment of racial identity. Experiencing this moral whiplash is part of the ongoing conversation and exploration of the influence of racial identity. Based on Salvatore's use of writing to understand these problems, it is likely that this seeming contradiction will lead to a deeper exploration of religious influences and follow an inner moral compass rather than religious teachings. The continual theme of doing what is right throughout the series, not human or divine law but according to what is true to

one's heart, hints towards Drizzt's future struggles with the larger influence racial thinking has in all aspects of culture.

At the heart of fantasy gaming and pulp novels is the problematic representation of evil. Racial representations are often the result of superficially defining good and evil with little account for individual actions. Players are becoming increasingly concerned about how writers represent evil, whether through entire races or individuals. The issue is not to eliminate evil entirely, but to repurpose it. Quinn argues that "evil is still a great narrative tool, and still carries constructive energy to use in our stories. We just need to restructure its use and stop using evil as a short-cut that means you can kill me" (par. 21). There can be evil orcs and good elves provided that the potential for the opposite to be true also exists. Removing blanket assumptions is the first step in this change, but one that will require deliberate thought and action from the game designers and writers.

Elves in *Dungeons and Dragons*

This chapter has examined fantasy's shift to worldbuilding rather than focusing on individual stories. *D&D* has served as one example of the influence and success of this change. To further isolate one element of the game—the development of the elves—will permit further exploration of the elves' cultural significance. As explored in the first chapter, Tolkien standardized the contemporary elf in fantasy literature. Although there are exceptions, like Christmas elves and *Harry Potter*'s house-elves, the majority are Tolkienesque. Danielle Kirby argues that

to understand the contemporary imagery of the elf, however, it is important to refer back to the work of Tolkien. His imagery and characterization are still one of the major touchstones of contemporary representations and indeed, his work is of central

importance in the development of subsequent fantasy literature, in many ways constituting something of a blueprint. (75)

Tolkien's writing influenced contemporary fantasy literature because he standardized many roles of fantastic creatures. Elves are more consistent in their characterization in contemporary fantasy; they accept caretaker roles and are often aloof from human affairs (Kirby 74). There is a clear distinction between elves and fairies: "human-sized fairies in modern fantasy can then commonly be found closer to the mundane world, while elves, in the post-Tolkienian sense, are found in completely fantastic worlds" (Bergman 181). This statement may explain why Christmas and house elves can be part of the real world rather than being on a Secondary World. While elves and fairies may share similar physical traits, such as pointed ears and slender bodies, Elves are typically human-sized while fairies are tiny creatures, establishing a clear distinction between these two creatures and being fully separated from their earlier synonymous nature. *D&D* elves share many similarities with Tolkien's Elves including appearance, mannerisms, and values. However, early game manuals were less focused on worldbuilding than on defining what elves can do in the game. Below is most of the elf's description from the first edition of *D&D*:

Elves can begin as either Fighting-Men or Magic-Users and freely switch class whenever they choose, from adventure to adventure, but not during the course of a single game. Thus, they gain the benefits of both classes and may use both weaponry and spells. They may use magic armor and still act as Magic-Users. However, they may not progress beyond 4th level Fighting-Man (Hero) nor 8th level Magic-User (Warlock). Elves are more able to note secret and hidden doors, able to locate secret passages on a roll of 1-4... Elves have the ability of moving silently and are nearly invisible in their gray-green cloaks. (Gygax "Rules" 8)

What is evident is the definitions of what elves can or cannot do, creating a more technical, rule-based game at the beginning, with more focus on combat than roleplaying, as was more typical of other tabletop games and military games of the time. Although there are some references to roleplaying elements, like their silent movements and cloak colors, the focus is on what the books declare is possible. The inclusion of fantasy elements allowed for more stories to be incorporated, mainly through the DM rather than through players. Later editions began to focus less on what a race or a class could do but provided opportunities for multiple races and classes to do things based on the individual character that a player has created. This change meant that the game provides background information for understanding different types of elves, allowing for the greater potential for roleplaying, and greater player flexibility. In contrast to the description of the elves in the first edition, *D&D*'s fifth edition's section on elves is four pages long, with half a page dedicated to the drow who were not a playable race until *Unearthed Arcana*, a module published in 1985. Additionally, there were several other elven subcategories introduced: the gray elves, wood elves, and valley elves, demonstrating further distinctions of elves. In fifth edition's discussion of the elves, there are several significant things to note on the first page. The words describing the elves mimic Tolkien-esque descriptions:

Elves are a magical people of otherworldly grace, living in the world but not entirely part of it. They live in places of ethereal beauty, in the midst of ancient forests or in silvery spires glittering with faerie light, where soft music drifts through the air and gentle fragrances waft on the breeze. Elves love nature and magic, art and artistry, music and poetry, and the good things of the world. (Mearls and Crawford 21)

Unlike the first edition's strict guidelines for defining elven capabilities, the fifth edition begins with a description of what the elves value to give insight on what it means to play an elf rather

than explicit rules on how to play one. This passage contains most of the checklist Tolkien has provided for Elven identities: disassociation from the world and their connection to beauty, nature, and music, and goodness. Over time, the elves have maintained their Tolkien-esque qualities, furthering their standardization. Thus, their idealized cultural qualities remain the same. Furthermore, the descriptions of elves reveal the culture, not the rules of the game, emphasizing the shift from race rules to a narrative which can inspire how to roleplay an elf.

The second significant detail on the first page describing the elves is a picture of Drizzt Do'Urden. This placement may be a questionable choice as he is a dark elf, a subcategory of elves, and is placed beside the general elf information and not beside the drow category. He is the first elf a player may see, in place of a more traditional elf, revealing his prominence among contemporary elves. On the last page of the elf section, there are three paragraphs dedicated to the drow, summarizing their society, and one paragraph focused on Drizzt. One reason for Drizzt's dominance in the elf section is because he is "perhaps the most popular character in the history of *Dungeons and Dragons*" (Charlie Hall par. 13). Drizzt will be examined in the third chapter, but it is important to recognize his prominence in the game and not just in Salvatore's books. This emphasis on Drizzt suggests that he has transcended his drow heritage and serves as the ideal elf despite his untraditional appearance.

D&D is important to examine with contemporary expressions of modern elven identity because of the game's popularity, but more significantly because of the game's introduction of the drow, its representation of the dark/black elf. Although Gyax created the drow, Salvatore developed them. While creating the Underdark, Gyax needed a ruling race, and he decided on a fey creature. This decision led him to the drow. Greenwood describes how the "elegant, dark and deadly drow are a hated and feared race" (3). These creatures "were designed to be the antithesis

of the usual elves” by having evil natures, following a chaotic evil goddess, and living in matriarchal societies (Gygax “Gamasutra” par. 41). To create the antithesis, he subverted elven expectations of skin color, living environments, and alignment. Elves are usually depicted with fair skin, a physical connection with goodness and whiteness, but the drow have black skin. Elves typically live in forests and dislike being underground while the drow live in the Underdark after their exile from the surface world. While elves typically have what the game describes as a good alignment, or are at worst neutral to the affairs outside their kin, the drow are evil, keen on achieving their personal goals through any means. Ed Greenwood describes them as “obsidian-skinned, masters of magic, cruel reputation, [and] masters of subtle trickery” (3). One characteristic that perhaps more deliberately subverts Tolkien’s Elves is the drows’ height. While Tolkien’s Elves were designed as taller than humans to reflect their spiritual superiority, the drow are shorter than most humans. In Tolkien’s world, “the height of a character is more than a merely physical attribute: it is a sign of power and majesty” (Martinez 71). By creating the drow as shorter, Gygax reinforces his undercutting of their majesty as not as a positive attribute but as a negative characteristic. These descriptions come together to create a subverted elf.

The drow are a perfect example of how literary paratext writers, like Salvatore, can popularize characters and races. In his lecture at Northeastern University, he described how his editor was late to a meeting to try to sell his book idea for *The Crystal Shard*, and she insisted that he needed a sidekick for Wulfgar. Salvatore first thought of a dark elf ranger, which his editor was concerned about because “there was probably a reason that no one had written one before” since there was so little information available about them (“Northeastern”). Pressed for time, however, she asked for the character’s name and Salvatore responded with Drizzt Do’Urden. Originally intended to be Wulfgar’s sidekick, Drizzt became central and their

relationship changed during the early drafts. Salvatore completed his *Icewind Dale* trilogy and considered moving to other projects, but fan interest in Drizzt and the drow prompted Wizards of the Coast's request for Salvatore to write what would become *The Dark Elf* trilogy, detailing Drizzt's backstory and introducing the drows' world. When he sat down to write, the resources Salvatore had included the *D&D* modules *Descent to the Depths of the Earth*, *Vault of the Drow*, and *Queen of the Demon Web Pits*. The *Fiend Folio* had a one-page entry on how to play a drow. Salvatore describes how "there were some references to drow in there, the snake-headed whips were in there, the matriarchal society was in there, but it didn't really define them. It was just enough information for you to run a dungeon and torture your players with dark elves" ("Lightspeed" par. 8). Here is the distinction between game mechanics and transitioning to a focus on worldbuilding for players to delve into. This evolution, however, stemmed from the interest readers and writers who wanted to use the drow and thus needed to explore more than what the original game manuals provided for defining who and what a drow elf is. *The Drow of the Underdark* recognizes Salvatore's work to develop the drows' identity, a book which focuses on supplementing campaign materials for the drow and their society. Published in 1990, only one year after the publication of *Homeland*, *The Drow of the Underdark* works to fill in players' desire for all things drow. In the dedication, Greenwood writes his thanks, "most of all, to Bob Salvatore for bringing the drow to life in the Realms—and spinning tales of the Realms to warm many a fireside, down the passing years" (2). This special credit demonstrates the influence Salvatore had for not only fully developing the drow but popularizing them as Tolkien had done with his Elves a few decades earlier.

Conclusion

This chapter explored *D&D* as a game and its connection to transformations in fantasy literature with focusing on worldbuilding and shared story environments. Inspired by popular culture texts ranging from Tolkien to Lovecraft, *D&D* draws from culture to bring the popular to one world. As a popular game and serving the foundations for MMORPGs, *D&D* reinforces the representations of fantastic creatures and popularizes new races like the drow. The paratext surrounding the game provides another means for players to explore campaign settings and creates core characters, like Drizzt, to guide people through the world. This paratext serves as a means for players of the game to author their stories within the world and thus to enrich the world through their characters. The drow would not have the prominence they have today if it was not for Salvatore's work and his readers' desire for more. Although *D&D* as a game can reinforce racial thinking due to its ludic elements, there is still potential for personal growth experiences should the players choose that exploration. The books, however, are the key texts for exploring racial limitations and freedoms, which will be explored in the next chapter. The drow are *D&D* and Salvatore's contribution to elven identities by introducing the subverted idealized race, the potential for what humanity may become.

Chapter Three: “Fantasy is Racist:” Exploring Salvatore’s Racial Representations of the Elves, Drow, and Humans in *The Legend of Drizzt*

The second chapter explored contemporary attitudes towards racism in fantasy and why people readily accept racial structures in fantasy worlds. The third chapter focuses on racial representations in Salvatore’s *The Legend of Drizzt*, comparing the drow, the surface elves, and humans and contrasting the personal identities of Drizzt and his human doppelganger Artemis Entreri. This chapter highlights Salvatore’s approach to fantasy racism. He claims that “one of the things that intrigues [him] about fantasy is that it is racist” (“Escapist” par. 6). Most scholars focus this argument on orcs—something Salvatore explores in *The Hunter’s Blade* and *The Transitions* trilogies—but the series-long focus on the elves’ racial representations remains central to his books. Drizzt’s perspective and actions complicate the contrast between the surface elves and the drow. The drow reveal Drizzt’s expected racial identity, which he transcends by establishing his personal identity which is possible because his appearance and abilities do not restrict him. The surface elves allow for an examination of elvish villainy and the significance of a tragic event to create an elf villain. Entreri, a human character who acts like a drow, serves as Drizzt’s doppelganger to examine the clash of racial and personal identities. Drizzt’s interactions with Innovindil, Ellifain, and Entreri allow him to understand himself in addition to the world’s racial structures and cultural values. These attitudes support Salvatore’s claim that “fantasy is racist” and his stories allow readers to see the cultural values and hierarchies within fantasy, revealing racial thinking in our world. By exploring how these thoughts influence fantasy realms, scholars of fantasy and popular culture can understand the embedded racial thinking which permeates popular culture.

Stories help bridge the gaps between differing viewpoints, allowing people to better understand fundamental problems in the world (Delgado and Stefancic). Fantasy is especially helpful for bridging these gaps as fantasy is a metaphor for contemporary attitudes towards race and racism. Delgado and Stefancic argue that storytelling is a “means to name one’s own reality by using narrative to showcase and examine experiences of racial oppression” (462). Critical Race Theory applies to *The Legend of Drizzt* because the series grapples with encounters with racism, and Salvatore’s use of a fantasy background further highlights racial differences. The tendency of most pulp fantasy fiction is to follow the conventional racial standards. Young argues that “role-playing game worlds like the many realms of D&D are structured by race...[but] players and authors are able to subvert the expectations these rules might create and tell stories that make anti-racist statements” (“Popular” 58). Despite the variety of races, cultures, beliefs, and moralities, everything Salvatore explores through Drizzt and his other characters applies to our world as he deliberately writes “to make sense of things. I force my characters, under duress, to help me clarify my own emotions, hopes, and thoughts” (“Messenger”). Salvatore explores reality through fantastic metaphor, allowing a better view of how people understand racial thinking.

Part of the problem behind why fantasy has been slow to change its formula is because fantasy has long been associated with product consumption. Many fantasy texts, especially the sword-and-sorcery tales published after Tolkien, would be what Roland Barthes calls readerly texts: a text with recognizable characters and events, typically “conform[ing] to the prevailing codes and conventions, literary and social, and so are readily and comfortably interpretable and naturalizable in the process of reading” (Abrams and Harpham 365). They follow conventions and usually do not encourage readers to think about what they are reading or the implications of

why things are as they are in these books. In contrast, a writerly text challenges convention and plays with readers' expectations. Barthes defines a writerly text as one which demands interpretation and thought from the reader because it often "violates, parodies, or innovates upon prevailing conventions, and thus persistently shocks, baffles, and frustrates standard expectations" (Abrams and Harpham 365). Although not at the standard of Barthes' writerly text, Salvatore plays with some of fantasy's conventions. He challenges why a dwarf can transcend his racial expectations, but a goblin cannot, or why it is so expected to kill an orc on sight. Furthermore, Barthes argues that "the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of text," something a writerly text is more capable of doing than a readerly one (4). In Salvatore's case, reading Tolkien and engaging with the *D&D* texts inspired him not just to consume more of the same texts, but to eventually produce texts which would complicate why racial hierarchies are established as they are in fantasy literature. Although reading experiences vary, people read Salvatore's work as either the readerly text, light fun reading to be consumed, or as a writerly text, causing people to ask questions. He explains that

when I'm writing my books, I'm not trying to give people the answers. I'm trying to get them to ask the questions. And judging from the response I've gotten to Drizzt in particular regarding racism, I think a lot of people are asking themselves good questions...and coming up with good answers. ("Lightspeed" par. 15)

Salvatore does not pretend to know all the answers to this long-developed question, but he is trying to raise awareness of the issue through his stories. Building this awareness is something crucial to discuss in popular culture to be able to develop change and to move towards a more inclusive world that still maintains its inner consistency.

Despite authors' freedom to embrace anti-racist ideals, there are more books preserving racial distinctions. One of *D&D*'s limitations is how ludic elements can restrict how players interact with different races and how they are encouraged to kill monsters for experience. Working within more traditional narrative formats, Salvatore does not have these ludic limitations on him and can explore these issues more deeply; novels make it easier to embrace anti-racist stories. Most fantasy, however, has maintained Tolkien's structures, tropes, and themes and fewer are willing to change the formula. Salvatore was one of these authors originally, riding the thrill of success after his first few publications and trying to maintain an income as a writer. By 1993, however, "the initial exuberance of publishing had worn off, as well as the burst of nonstop writing [he] had experienced (out of terror) when [he] finally quit [his] day job in 1990," allowing him to take a step back to explore the racial paradox he had seen ("Preface" 19). He questioned whether "the notion of a race representing the embodiment of evil [is] a classic definition of racism[.] Of course it is!" ("Preface" 20). This paradox grows because of the glorifying nature of racial interactions further stressed in all styles of games from Tolkien to now. In an interview, Salvatore said that "one of the things that intrigues me about fantasy is that it is racist... You're not talking about humans, so I guess you can get away with it. Orcs are supposed to be the embodiment of evil in fantasy," which is why players always engage in fights with them ("Escapist" par. 6). Salvatore warns that authors must "be very careful, particularly regarding analogies," with racism in fantasy because it is too easy to fall into the thinking that because orcs usually embody evil, that is all they are capable of being ("Messenger"). The establishment of how these races interact causes people to reflect on the disturbing reality of how embedded racial thinking is in popular culture and fantasy literature.

The slow change in thinking about racial identities is an outcome of reflecting on the reinforcements of racial differences. When asked about Obould's unusual orc aspiration of coexistence with other races, Salvatore explains that

it's an interesting question because it comes from racial issues, the prejudices that people have, the cultural differences—but I'm always uncomfortable with it. In a way, fantasy does the same thing. Fantasy is a war without guilt. We have slanderous names for whoever we're fighting [during a war]. You dehumanize your enemy because that makes it easier to kill them. Fantasy does that to the ultimate level with orcs, goblins, trolls, and things like that. But there's been a movement in fantasy, because of computer games, to allow people to play as orcs [and other traditionally evil races]. Now people want to know: are orcs really bad? (“Escapist” par. 8)

Historically, the same techniques have been used to dehumanize the other to establish superiority. Just because these creatures do not exist does not excuse the mindset people allow themselves where the hierarchies are far more rigid and seemingly clearer than they are in the real world. The “ultimate level” Salvatore describes is because these monsters are not human and possess all the qualities people try to avoid and that is why they are so easy to separate. When they are not human, there is less of a moral question about whether there are any other options besides simply killing them. Salvatore explains his confusion in fantasy literature because “you embody evil in a race, and then you disembody it with your sword, and that's also what mankind has done through the centuries, right? By dehumanizing the enemy so you don't feel bad about killing them” (Salvatore “Lightspeed” par. 14). Few people cry over a dead orc or goblin. Because the dehumanized creatures are distanced from humanity, there is no Faramir asking where the orc came from or if he had any family because there is no need for this line of

thinking. Salvatore's blunt language of a war without guilt is difficult for a 2018 audience to accept, an audience who believes people have made significant progress in overcoming racial thinking. In many narratives, there is no guilt in the massacres of these creatures, but attitudes have slowly changed because some people have started to question these racial divides. This questioning has been picked up by video games which allow players to roleplay an orc and other traditionally villainous races. These changing character choices allow players to question if orcs and other monsters are all evil or if they can reveal more about what it means to be human. The question of whether they are that evil ranges from narrative to narrative, but the questions are increasingly asked, signaling a transition period in thinking about racial differences in fantasy narratives.

The characters in *The Legend of Drizzt* accept racial difference as commonplace, and race is understood depending on cultural and personal viewpoints. The books establish that most of the protagonists are representative of their races and many characters reinforce their stereotypes: Bruenor is a tough old dwarf, never running from a battle; Regis is a halfling, typically preferring the comforts and pleasures of home and food rather than adventure; Wulfgar is a warrior, needing to learn to fight wisely rather than just relying on brute force. The characters are self-aware of how they represent race when the protagonists are preparing to depart in *The Crystal Shard* and make the following exchange:

"The four of us, then!" proclaimed Wulfgar. "One to represent each of the four common races: Bruenor for the dwarves, Regis for the halflings, Drizzt Do'Urden for the elves, and myself for the humans. A fitting troupe!"

"I hardly think the elves would choose a dwarf to represent them," Drizzt remarked.

Bruenor snorted. “Ye think the halflings’d choose Rumblebelly for their champion?”

(Crystal 344)

From the beginning of the series, racial thinking is established, especially regarding the atypical drow hero. Unlike the selection of Regis who is not a heroic halfling but friends with the others, Drizzt is an elf with an unconventional appearance who otherwise fits the expected model. Although Drizzt’s friends believe he is a worthy candidate to represent the elves, his appearance and, at this point in the series, his lack of worldly reputation would make him an unlikely selection. Unlike Regis, Drizzt’s comment is because drow do not fit elven ideals for an adventuring group because most drow are not Drizzt. Bruenor believes that Drizzt encompasses the heart of the elves regardless of his background. Significant to note is that the phrase the “common races” is synonymous with “good races,” implying a rigid boundary between them. This phrase is more common in the earlier books as the series turns to questioning the connection between good races and morality. The self-awareness in these books allows for a deliberate exploration of racial representations and capabilities.

Before delving into human versus elven understandings of the world, scholars must first examine how racial identity influences a character’s perspectives and actions. Ideas of racial difference are still prominent in contemporary and historical contexts, often used as absolutes. Negative absolutes were used to propagate ideas of colonialism by portraying an entirely negative racial identity or by demonstrating positive absolutes in the modern classroom where people stress the idea that anyone can equally succeed regardless of ethnicity. Drizzt believes that racial absolutes only exist among the gods who epitomize certain values:

The concept that is Lolth is purely evil; that of Mielikki, purely good. As opposite as black and white, with no shades of gray in between. Thus are the concepts, good and evil.

Absolute, rigid...There can be no shades of gray...This is epitomized by our beliefs in the pantheon, but what of the mortal races, the rational beings—the humans and the races of elvenkind and dwarvenkind, the gnomes and the halflings, the goblinoids and giantkin. Here the question muddles, the absolutes blend. To many, the equation is simple: I am drow, drow are evil, thus I am evil. They are wrong. For what is a rational being if not a choice? And there can be no evil, nor any good, without intent. It is true that in the Realms there are races and cultures, particularly the goblinoids, which show a general weal of evil, and thus, such as the surface elves, which lean toward the concept of good. But even in these, which many consider personifications of an absolute, it is the individual's intents and actions that ultimately decide. I have known a goblin who was not evil, and I am a drow who has not succumbed to the ways of his culture. Still, few drow and fewer goblins can make such claims, and so the generalities hold. (*Passage* 173-74)

The gods maintain consistent values and identities because they epitomize certain characteristics or ideals: Lolth is a goddess of chaos, a negative attribute, while Mielikki is a goddess of the forest, a positive association, and their alignments rest with what they represent. While races follow the same rule—the drow who worship Lolth will typically reflect her values—they are not embodiments of these ideals because they are not representative of absolute concepts. Mortal races can be variable in their alignments. Drizzt argues that he, like dwarves or goblins, can choose his beliefs, but he recognizes the additional struggles the traditionally evil races encounter because the ideas of what certain races can do are so ingrained in societies. Yet it is easier for a typically good race, like elves changed to reflect their difference, to become evil rather than for a typically evil race to become good. What is clear from Drizzt's description is that villainous yet beautiful creatures, like drow, have an easier time becoming heroes than it is

for a good race to become unliked villains. It is even less unlikely to have worthless, unliked elf villains because the drow are celebrated and remain idealized in their appearance and capabilities. This fact suggests that although people are making progress towards redeeming other races, the elves cannot become incompetent. Even when they are evil, as the drow are, they are greatly feared and successfully maintain their power.

Part of Salvatore's claim that fantasy is racist emerges from the limitations different races have in their ability to be heroic or villainous on an individual level. Drizzt discovers that it is difficult for a typically villainous race, like goblins, to be treated humanely, much less be considered heroic. In "Dark Mirror," Drizzt encounters a goblin named Nojheim whom he initially views within an expected racial identity. Drizzt is therefore "always eager to battle such vile creatures....[and has] never held any reservations about dealing harsh justice to goblins" (38; 40). Goblins are a common threat with numbers aiding their destruction. Salvatore's choice of using a goblin in this situation is significant because it contrasts the elves, idealized versions of humankind, with the goblins, who are the antithesis: goblins are as varied as humans are but less creative and prone to warlike behavior. The goblin is the threat of what humanity can become, and Nojheim challenges the idea that the goblins are merely our fears about ourselves manifested. This thought disturbs Drizzt. He describes how Nojheim was physically

indeed a goblin, but I could tell already by the sincerity of his tone that he was far different in temperament from his wicked kin. The thought shook me more than a little.

In my years as a ranger, I had never stopped to question my actions against goblins, never held back my scimitars long enough to determine if any of them might be of a different demeanor than I had come to know as typical of the normally evil creatures. (48)

Like Drizzt, Nojheim is different from the rest of his race because his personal identity clashes with his expected racial identity. Although Drizzt insists that race does not restrict creatures and he gives himself as an example, Nojheim disagrees with him. A drow can overcome racial prejudice more easily than a goblin, and Nojheim reveals why other races struggle with accepting one fantastic race over another: he tells Drizzt that “[he is] an oddity to them, strangely beautiful, even by their own standards of beauty. [His] features are fine...[his] eyes penetrating. Even [his] skin, so black and lustrous, might be considered beautiful” (52). Nojheim raises two ideas which help explain why only one race can be accepted: first is the uniqueness of where his kin live. Drizzt becomes distanced from other drow who live underground and rarely travel to the surface world, with even rarer contact with humans. Because of this infrequent exposure, there are tales of dark elves and humans should be afraid of them, but they are considered as a ghost story: something to terrify people but without the risk of them appearing in real life. The second aspect is his beauty. Drizzt is still an elf and only has a few changes to his appearance from the traditional elf: his black skin, white hair, and lavender-colored eyes. His appearance makes him exotic, a curiosity to those who have never seen anything like him before. His attractiveness encourages others to be more open to the fact that Drizzt is different, but fewer would be as open to Nojheim who is not only ugly but whose race is in constant conflict with humans. This artificial division of good and evil races is problematic because it is based on morals assigned to races to provide a racial identity. If Nojheim successfully overcame racial prejudice, everyone would be forced to face what he describes as “a truth that would make them question what they had known all of their lives” (52). The influence this event has on Drizzt is his reluctance to lead the fight against the goblins without at least attempting to parlay first. This encounter causes him to pause and consider how he views other races and the possibility that there are other goblins

who are trying to transcend their expected racial identities as Drizzt had done for himself. With this story, Salvatore raises questions for readers about how, and more importantly why, certain races are more capable of overcoming racism than others.

The Drow

The drow were examined in chapter two and this chapter focuses on Salvatore's representations of them, considering the cultural complications for subverting an idealized race. Because Salvatore was one of the central figures behind creating the drow as they appear in *The Forgotten Realms*, his portrayal of them is consistent with their descriptions in the *Monster Manuals*. Readers are first introduced to the drows' beauty and threat. Drizzt describes the drow as one of the

most evil races in all the Realms...a beautiful, slender, and delicate people, with features sharp and haunting. Yet the drow are the rulers of this unruled world, the deadliest of the deadly, and all other races take cautious note of their passing. Beauty itself pales at the end of a dark elf's sword. (*Homeland 2*)

These creatures are almost uncanny as an elf, maintaining their beauty and grace, but their power intimidates others. They maintain the cultural value of beauty, not perverted, but exotic. The drows' appearance is significant as they remain physically idealized despite their dark skin being a problematic signifier of their evil. The story of the drows' skin color is in one of their mythological origins when Correllon changed the skin color of the elves who rebelled against the pantheon before they were exiled to the Underdark (Marmell et al. 32-33). Their black skin is a physical reflection of their evil deeds. Despite their black skin, white hair, and red eyes, they are still attractive, comparable to the vampire who is also physically seductive with subtle hints to an evil nature. While one may interpret the drows' design as beautiful creatures who can also be

evil, their appearance suggests their beauty in addition to their power simply makes them a more formidable opponent than those who only have power.

Intimidation and power are key elements of drows' racial identity. Despite being an evil race, these elves remain physically perfect, maintaining Tolkien's standardization of physical idealization. When Drizzt encounters a Duergar (dark/deep dwarf) when he and Entreri are trying to escape Mithral Hall's forges, Drizzt acts on his expected racial identity as a drow to convince the Duergar to show him the way out by playing on the Duergar's fear. The deep dwarf's fear and his desire to please Drizzt reveal that "the drow carried even more fearful a respect among the races of the underdark than among surface dwellers" (*Streams* 328). This fear other races have of the drow is constant throughout the books. While the dark elves are an exotic ghost story on the surface world, the drow are a continual threat to other creatures of the Underdark. Through successful intimidation, they maintain their superiority as the Underdark's rulers.

After being introduced to the drow's appearance and reputation, readers then learn about their motivations, primarily through their religion which promotes vengeance against the surface elves. To be drow means having close ties with their religion which emphasizes chaos and vengeance. Dinin explains to Drizzt the importance of the surface elves' deaths. The surface raids are the main way they participate in their revenge as Dinin calls out to Drizzt that "today you know the glory it is to be a drow" or "finally you have learned what it is to be a drow warrior!" (*Homeland* 243; 245). It is in these moments that Drizzt becomes disconnected from the other drow. This distance is not a new development for Drizzt. After he was born, his family noticed that he was different because of his lavender eyes, an unusual color for a drow and a physical symbol of his difference. Drizzt's behaviors also enhance this distinction. Vierna describes Drizzt "as intelligent as any male child [she had] ever known; he could levitate by the

age of five. After he had become page prince, it took tendays of punishment to teach him the duty of keeping his gaze to the floor, as if such a simple act ran unnaturally counter to his constitution” (*Homeland* 75).³ Drizzt always struggled within drow society, even with such simple actions like how “smiles came too easily to Drizzt” (*Homeland* 83). When Drizzt becomes part of the patrol which will participate in a surface raid, he hopes that this event will finally provide him with the feeling of unity he had been missing, to understand what it means to be a drow. The raid, however, contributes to his disengagement from drow society, and he seeks meaning from drow who also do not feel like they belong. When Matron Mother Malice sacrifices Zaknafein to the Spider Queen, Drizzt leaves Menzoberrazan and renounces his kin. He claims that they “are his people, by skin and by heritage but [he is] no longer kin to them” (*Homeland* 343). To stay with his family would mean to deny the person he knows he is, and instead he ventures first into exile and then to the surface, slowly finding those who show him a way of life more akin to his heart.

Characters in fantasy literature are often first understood racially before some creatures are given the opportunity to prove a different identity. Despite Drizzt’s personality and heroism, he faces fear and prejudice because he is a drow. After Entreri kidnaps Regis, Drizzt and his friends hurry to follow, but Drizzt’s race will cause delays in the new lands they will travel to because of the drows’ racial reputation. Feeling pressured by the lack of time and the importance of their quest, Drizzt agrees to wear a magical mask that will disguise his appearance as a surface elf. When Drizzt first tries on the mask, “he did not know how to react to this blatant alteration. Embarrassed, he looked to Wulfgar for approval” (*Halfling* 57). His appearance is one humans accept more readily on the surface, but the change also undermines his attempts to have his

³ A tenday refers to a measure of time within the series, an equivalent of a week.

reputation overshadow his heritage. Wulfgar's disapproval of the need for the mask brings comfort to Drizzt. While the mask reflects the elven identity which resonates with Drizzt's values, he still identifies as a drow and thus wearing the mask is hiding who he is and undermines his belief that he should be accepted regardless of his race. When his mask falls off during a sea battle, the crew are first fearful of Drizzt, but they overcome their fear and accept Drizzt because of his heroic actions (*Halfling* 180). This moment is where he first finds acceptance outside of his group of friends, and his reputation begins to spread. Although different races approached Drizzt with caution initially, they finally accept him, allowing his personal identity to transcend his racial identity.

Surface Elves

The surface elves, who are on rare occasion referred to as faeries, are reminiscent of Tolkien's Elves who provide context for what it means to be an elf. Consistent with Tolkien's standardization, the elves are secondary characters and are beautiful yet deadly defenders of their woodland homes. They are skilled fighters, trained with bows and swords, and will help achieve goals that will assist the greater good. Innovindil is described in Tolkienesque terms: she is beautiful, has blonde hair, and wields both a sword and a bow. Through Innovindil, readers, alongside Drizzt, explore what it means to be an elf. She claims that what sets the elves apart from other races is that their "conscience is [their] salvation. [Their] questioning of everything, of right and wrong, of action and consequence, is what defines [their] purpose....In a lifetime that will last centuries, some sense of purpose is often all [they] have" (*Sea* 179-80). This purpose stems from being a longer-lived race who will live centuries longer than other races. This conscience is what she sees Drizzt possessing, what aligns him with the surface elves rather than the drow. This difference in their beliefs alters how they view the world and changes what

purpose they each have; the drow aim to satisfy their ambitions both for personal gain and for Lolth; Drizzt seeks to do what is right. To be an elf means a commitment to a greater purpose which will be determined based on the kind of elf one is: to become an agent of chaos or conscience.

One surface elf who does not conform to the expected racial identity of the surface elves is Ellifain who dedicates her life to killing Drizzt for what she views as his part in the massacre of her clan. This traumatic event permanently alters her perspectives on drow, and she views all drow as only capable of having one identity. Innovindil describes how “with every tale we heard about your exploits in the service of the goodly races, she grew even more outraged, convinced that it was all a lie. Convinced that Drizzt Do’Urden was all a lie” (*Lone* 215). Ellifain can only see Drizzt as an illusion of heroism, unable to transcend his expected racial identity to become the hero everyone else proclaimed him to be, simply because he is a drow. Her belief results in her pursuing Drizzt: she disguises herself as a man, purchases expensive enchantments, and hires a trainer who fights in a similar manner to Drizzt to learn how to defeat him. Her experiences prevent her from recognizing that it is possible for someone to transcend racial expectations, that a drow can be a hero when that is not his expected racial identity. When asked about whether she believes in redemption, she claims that she does not believe it to be possible for any drow. She is relentless in her desire to achieve her mission, and when presented with the possibility of Drizzt returning to the Underdark, she declares that she will “kill every drow...[she] would obliterate the entire race and be proud of the action. [She] would kill their matrons and their murderous raiders. [She] would drive [her] dagger into the heart of every drow child” to ensure Drizzt’s death (*Sea* 213). Her purpose drives her and she is not amused or interested in E’kressa’s tricks, who at one point makes a curious comment: “impatience is the folly of humans, not of elves”

(*Sea* 50). This comment predicts that her impatience will lead to her doom because she is not behaving like one of her race should. Ellifain is willing to sacrifice everything for her revenge which does not fit how most elves view the world; even the drow place a higher emphasis on self-preservation. Her hatred of the drow matches some of the drows' hatred of the surface elves; she is a surface elf who possesses a drow's obsession for killing the other type of elf and thus subverts what readers expect from her based on her race.

Salvatore wants his readers to feel sympathetic towards Ellifain's tragic story of loss and misguided vengeance and not view her as a true elf villain. Unlike Briza and other drow women who relish their evil and are not intended to be viewed sympathetically, Ellifain's situation questions the extent that circumstances influence the creation of elven villains. Ellifain was not born nor raised in an evil culture and only turned to vengeance to reveal what she views as the falsehood of Drizzt's character. One traumatic event transforms her perceptions of the world and she, like Drizzt, chooses to believe in a different perspective and nurtured different values from those of her kin. This idea of tragic circumstance is a common trait of surface elf villains in the series, thus complicating whether they can be true villains from a racial perspective. Her story suggests that sometimes a character's actions are a product of circumstance, regardless of race. She demonstrates that the elves are not flawless in these books, that they can take villainous roles unrestricted by racial expectation, but what is important to note is that she only takes this unexpected role because of a traumatic event. Her survival alters her perceptions, comparable to the prominent character of Dahlia later in the books. Also a surface elf, Dahlia seeks revenge against the Netherese who raided her village. This parallel to Ellifain questions how their lives change after an attack on their kin and their turn towards vengeance. Salvatore presents Ellifain's death as a tragic event with Drizzt lamenting the fact that his kin's actions that one night leads to

this outcome. His guilt for his kin's actions makes Drizzt wish that he had died in her place so she could heal and continue her life. Through Drizzt's perspective, readers are intended to view Ellifain as a victim to misguided actions and blind vengeance, someone he could have helped to overcome these perceptions.

Overcoming racial prejudice in *The Forgotten Realms* is no easy feat and tension remains among the races, including the elves. Ellifain's view is not an isolated perspective; citizens of Silverymoon, a city known for tolerance and acceptance, have "openly [offered] complaints, the light-skinned elves foremost among them. The enmity between the elves, light and dark, cannot be overstated" (*Sea* 84). Despite the knowledge that perhaps not all drow are their enemy, the elves are fearful of their underground cousins because of the havoc the drow would wreak on the surface. Early in the series, Drizzt faces challenges everywhere he travels because he is unknown and his race is terrifying. Although he is known and accepted in many places, including Silverymoon, there are those who continue to cling to traditional viewpoints. The above quotation is one of the few moments where readers have hints of the elves' concern with dark elves, even if it is only Drizzt who had been to the city by this point. Although he made great progress in transcending his racial identity and being known as Drizzt rather than as a dark elf, there remains some uneasiness and tension among the elves. Although Bruenor can declare that "an elf's an elf," even he initially fears Drizzt's arrival into the world and only accepts him after befriending him (*Sea* 241). The elves continue to remain unequal, but they have opportunities to create their identities which can be accepted outside the expectations of their race. These opportunities are still restricted to certain races, however, and reinforce Salvatore's claim that fantasy is racist; despite how far people go to overcome racism, there is still work to do.

Monstrous Appearance and Cultural Value

The differences in appearances between elves and monstrous creatures raise questions regarding the relationship between appearance and culture and help determine why the elves are so highly valued. Some attention needs to be paid to the drows' bodies because Debra Gimlin argues that "the body is a medium of culture" and how people interpret someone relies on how that person is read (3). Traditionally, "the body is fundamental to the self because it serves to indicate who an individual is internally," one perspective for understanding the Victorian era (Gimlin 3). Also connected to the body reflecting identity is physiognomy: the belief that fixed aspects of physical appearance are signs of a person's qualities (Collins 252). The ability to recognize people based on their appearance seems to help organize and classify people for easier understanding. Of particular concern is the connection between morality and physiognomy, and how physiognomy was "designed to reveal the moral order" (Hartley 7). These prominent cultural ideas are reflected in literature. Collins argues that nineteenth-century writers used physiognomy "not as a science with clear laws but as a system of human intuitive judgment that nevertheless could reveal certain truths about people" (257). One example is *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with the projection of the inner evil displayed in Mr. Hyde's deformed appearance. Beauty has thus had a long association with morality, one that has translated directly into fantasy literature by having monstrous creatures with grotesque appearances, establishing them as easy villains.

Embodied deviance is another helpful theory for understanding the initial impression that "the historical and cultural belief that deviant social behaviour (however that is defined) manifests in the materiality of the body, as a cause or an effect, or perhaps as merely a suggestive trance" (Urla and Terry 2). Black skin has been used as a signifier of moral corruption in western

literature, to label people as monsters and to ostracize them from society (Urla and Terry). What Gygas and Salvatore play with is trying to make the still identifiable elves appear monstrous by giving them these traditional signifiers. Previous to the drow, Bergman argues that for an elf to be evil, he had to be transformed into another creature, as Tolkien did with the creation of the Orcs (211). The drow challenge this perception because they are villainous while remaining elves. Typically, monsters' appearance reinforces the idea of corruption because monstrosity is "attributed both to imperfection, in the sense of deviation from the perfect norm, and the body parts...Monstrosity, like ugliness, is a lack of proper means and proportions between parts, the principles that define classical notions of beauty" (Hanafi 115). While beautiful monsters exist in *D&D* and Salvatore's work, like the drow, they still maintain power and grace and thus problematize this distinction, revealing the limitations of embodied deviance. The drow are creatures who maintain the "proper means and proportions between parts" through their physical idealization and yet are still capable of evil and chaos.

The second aspect of appearance and culture is how creatures' appearance tends to reflect their ability; beautiful creatures tend to be good with the ability to achieve feats while ugly creatures tend to be evil and need significant numbers to accomplish their goals. In contrast, drow are considered deadly both in groups and individually. Orcs are not regarded as dangerous individually but they become an overwhelming threat to the good races when thousands of orcs unite. This detail raises the question of ability in relation to the creatures' physical appearance and if monstrous bodies are partly disabled bodies because of their inability to accomplish what they set out to do. Thomson's book centers on how

disability is a representation, a cultural interpretation of physical transformation or configuration, and a comparison of bodies that structures social relations and institutions.

Disability, then, is the attribution of corporeal deviance—not so much a property of bodies, as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do. (6)

The grotesque appearances of some creatures may reflect their inability to be good or to follow moral values, another signifier. Goblins, like orcs, are generalized as evil creatures and their physical appearances reflect their moral natures, but they are partly disabled because they are ineffective while working towards their goals unless they are in large groups. Their bodies often reflect their corrupted morality, demonstrating how “physical difference yields a cultural icon signifying violated wholeness, unbounded incompleteness, unregulated particularity, dependent subjugation, disordered intractability, and susceptibility to external forces” (Thomson 44). The drow replicate this grotesqueness through their description of black skin with red eyes, signifiers typically associated with evil. Although they are not disabled in the sense of movements, senses, or activities, they are morally disabled with only a few being able to separate themselves from the society and its values, like Drizzt, or who use the society to further their goals, like Jarlaxle. The connection between appearance and morality is clear when looking at various creatures’ alignments in *D&D Monster Manuals* where the more evil a creature is, the less humanoid they are portrayed. Creatures like balors, beholders, and glabrezus share the chaotic evil alignment and have grotesque appearances that no one could mistake as human. Thus, their grotesque bodies serve as part of the “cultural work of defining the disabled subject as an object of visual difference,” affecting how they are interpreted (Thomson 18). The visual difference monsterizes these creatures further and restricts their racial identities because they are highly stigmatized. One idea behind cultural stigma is that the problem is not related to race but “inequalities, negative attitudes, misrepresentations, and institutional practices that result from the process of stigmatization” (Thomson 32). The different races are representative of ideals and stigmatized

aspects of human identity. The stigma comes from the creatures who are “made to signify what [people] fear to become” (Thomson 41). In fantasy literature, the fear of being greedy manifests itself as a goblin, with an appearance and traits which are not culturally valued, while the elves are physical embodiments of goodness with the fair skin and usually pale or golden hair. These examples of racial representations thus serve to reinforce or subvert different cultural values and stigmas to expose aspirations and fears.

Humans

Humans are the only creatures who are not limited by an expected racial identity because of fantasy’s anthropocentric focus, giving them the least resistance for establishing a personal identity rather than a racial one. Humans are dominant throughout *The Legend of Drizzt*, as primary and secondary characters, and they are the only racial doubling within the Companions. Most of the other characters on the surface they encounter are humans who have various beliefs and alignments. Drizzt comments that the

most curious and most diverse among the races are the humans. Here the equation and the expectations muddle most of all. Here perception reigns supreme. Here intent is oft hidden, secret. No race is more adept than humans at weaving a mask of justification. No race is more adept than humans at weaving a mask of excuses, at ultimately claiming good intent. And no race is more adept at believing its own claims (*Passage* 174-75).

Drizzt’s experiences with humans reflect the racial morality scale often seen in fantasy literature. Because humans serve as the focal point on this scale—that everyone else is judged superior or inferior based on appearance and alignments—humans can be heroes or villains without being questioned by readers; they are neutral on the scale because everyone else is compared to being human. In this passage, Drizzt reveals the negative qualities of being human, of trying to make

virtue—what Drizzt believes to be an absolute concept—a matter of perception and thus justifying a purpose that may not be virtuous. Their neutrality on this scale means they do not have a unified racial identity and can only be interpreted based on their personal identities and reputation.

Racial doubling is prominent in fantasy literature, and Nils Smeuninx argues that there are “few narrative devices [that] are so intimately connected with the fantastic—and fantasy as a genre—as the double” (11). He cites *The Lord of the Rings* as an example of how the doubling reveals the inner corruption of races and characters. He compares the Elves with the orcs, Aragorn to the Black Riders, Gandalf with Saruman, and Frodo with Gollum to reveal the consequences of corruption (12-18). This doubling also emerges with Salvatore’s use of the doppelganger as a deliberate exploration of race’s influence. Although there is a key doubling of the drow with their surface cousins, the doppelganger doubling is between Drizzt Do’Urden and Artemis Entreri. However, it is not enough for a doubling to exist, but it requires characters to recognize their doppelganger and “some crucial element of difference” between them (Smeuninx 20). The differentiation is “key to its use and function,” essential for exploring Drizzt and Entreri’s relationship (Smeuninx 24).

Scholars can also analyze racial constructions for the humans throughout Salvatore’s work, but the strongest case is the assassin Artemis Entreri who functions as a doppelganger to Drizzt Do’Urden. As Entreri progresses from an arch-nemesis to a friend, his encounters with Drizzt raise questions about racial and personal identity. When Entreri first appears in *Streams of Silver*, Catti-brie describes him as

a small man, slender as an elf and barely as tall as [Catti-brie], but every muscle on his compact frame was toned to its finest fighting edge. His very presence exuded an aura of

strength and an unshakeable confidence. This, too, unnerved Catti-brie, because it wasn't the brash cockiness of an exuberant youngster, but the cool air of superiority of one who had seen a thousand fights and had never been bested. (20)

One of the first physical descriptions of Entreri is the phrase "slender as an elf," the first reference to his similarity to Drizzt. He has an ideal body form, slim yet muscled which is valued in western culture and is the physique of most elves. Readers are also immediately told that he is not a heroic character, a warning by referring to his confidence and "cool air of superiority." This man is one who has transcended whatever challenges to become the best, similar to Drizzt's victories in Melee-Magthere. The immediate establishment of similarities between these two characters creates their function as a foil to each other. When Drizzt and Entreri first meet in battle, the fight is described as

two master swordsmen weaving and parrying in absolute harmony. Each anticipated each other's movements exactly, countering the other's counter, back and forth in a battle that seemed as though it could know no victor. One appeared the reflection of the other, and the only thing that kept the onlookers aware of the reality of the struggle was the constant clang of steel against steel as scimitar and saber came ringing together. They moved in and out of the shadows, seeking some small advantage in a fight of equals. (*Streams* 301-02)

Salvatore stresses their relationship as a foil in this scene as both characters begin to question themselves and each other. Their equal skill cannot be contested, but their rivalry is not merely focused on who the superior fighter is but what motivates them to fight and to be equal. Their duels are a physical manifestation of their emotional struggle about their identities. Entreri's struggle is in understanding how someone could be his equal without giving up love, passion,

and life; for Drizzt, he sees Entreri as whom he might have become in Menzoberrazan. Drizzt explains that he

recognized this man all too well. Passionless and pragmatic, and undeniably skilled in the ways of dealing death. Looking at Entreri, Drizzt saw what he himself might have become if he had remained in Menzoberranzan among his similarly amoral people.

Entreri epitomized tenets of drow society, the selfish heartlessness that had driven Drizzt from the bowels of the world in outrage. He eyed the assassin squarely, detesting every inch of the man, but somehow unable to detach himself from the empathy he felt.

(Streams 323)

This scene reveals Drizzt's recognition of a possible self he could have become had he embraced everything he rejected back in Menzoberrazan. This passage is a prime example of T.Apter's description of how the double views himself:

the double as the product of projective identification: a person splits off from himself and ascribes to another those features which he denies as belonging to himself; but because he still unconsciously recognizes the projected characteristics as his own, he identifies himself with the other. (49)

Here Drizzt faces all the possibilities of his heritage. To kill Entreri means to destroy a parallel self, for Drizzt to deny the self he could have become; it "would mean killing the darker side of himself...for he could have been as this man. This was the test of his worth, a confrontation against what he might have become" (*Streams* 335). Ultimately, his struggle with Entreri reflects his attempts to overcome his expected racial identity. Apter argues that "the presence of the double challenges the self's existence; it is initially parasitic upon the self, and its aim to destroy or displace the original self" (51). The need to destroy Drizzt consumes Entreri and challenges

how he understands his place in the world. His intent to defeat Drizzt in fair combat will prove that he is the superior fighter, but is also an attempt to destroy the original self as Apter argues. Through their encounters, both Drizzt and Entreri change their perspectives of the world and their place within it. Part of what these encounters reveal is that although Entreri can try to be the best he can be within his racial identity, he cannot surpass it beyond changing how he is perceived. Drizzt can transcend his racial identity by becoming a different kind of drow, but Entreri is limited to being human and cannot achieve the same level of being an elf; he can be considered elf-like, but he will never be one of the drow. It is when he accepts this realization that he can focus on being who he is rather than reaching beyond the possible for his race.

Drizzt's struggle with Entreri stems from the dark mirror idea that Entreri reflects who he could have become. Catti-brie reminds him that "killin' Entreri won't change the color of his skin—or the color of [Drizzt's] own" (*Halfling* 255). Drizzt's battle centered on being accepted for who he was, which is why he struggled with the mask that changed his appearance to a surface elf. Because of his heroic actions, characters overcame their fears about him as a dark elf and became known as Drizzt, a good drow; his personal identity transcended his racial identity. By embracing who he was, others began to see him as different from the rest of his race and eventually they accepted him.

The comparison between Entreri and the drow is significant as it is an ongoing comparison throughout the series, even leading to many characters commenting on how he seemed more akin to drow—ideas from drow and non-drow perspectives. When Catti-brie travels to Menzoberrazan to rescue Drizzt, she finds Entreri and declares that he survived "to go and live among those who're most akin to [him]" (*Starless* 248). Even though he is human, she

views his morality as comparable to the drows' and believes that is where he belongs. Similarly, Jarlaxle reflects on how he had never met a more dangerous or devious human:

“A pity his skin is so light,” Kimmuriel remarked.

Jarlaxle only smiled. He knew well enough that if Artemis Entreri had been born a drow in Menzoberranzan the man would have been among the greatest of weapon masters, or perhaps he would have exceeded that claim. Perhaps he would have been a rival to Jarlaxle for control of Bergan D'aerthe. (*Silent* 238)

The disgust Catti-brie sees and the capabilities Jarlaxle praise signify their perspectives about his potential to be drow; Catti-brie views him as malicious, but with the ability to be far worse than he already is, while Jarlaxle perceives someone who can be an asset. Another example is Rai'gy's comment that Entreri thinks like a drow, “offering as high a compliment as Jarlaxle had ever heard him give a human or to anyone else who was not a drow” (*Silent* 249). The power associated with being part of Bergan D'earthe is something Entreri declined. While he may have the abilities and reputation to be drow-like, his motivations do not align; he does not seek chaos and the glory of the Spider Queen but first to be the best assassin and then later to find inner peace. Entreri, like Drizzt, initially seems to be born into the wrong race, where another more accurately matches his heart. Entreri's encounters with Drizzt and his time in Menzoberrazan force him to reconsider his purpose. He had sacrificed everything to become a notorious assassin and to hone his fighting skills, but Drizzt is his fighting equal without having to make the same sacrifices. His personal struggle escalated through several duels with Drizzt until eventually Entreri “hadn't liked what he had seen in Menzoberranzan, such a clear mirror to his own dark soul” (*Starless* 367). It took more than confronting one individual who called into question his life's purpose; he had to see what his life was like on a larger scale. His humbling experience in

Menzoberrazan, a city full of Entreris, forced him to ask himself what his life had achieved and if it was worth it. Ultimately, Entreri does not have what it takes to be a drow. Although he is skilled, ruthless, and will do what it takes to achieve his goals, he cannot overcome his human limitations. His confrontations with Drizzt force him to reconsider how he has constructed his identity and to eventually accept who he is rather than who he was trying to become.

This chapter explored racial representations in Salvatore by comparing the drow, the surface elves, and humans; examines what it means to be a drow and how Drizzt's expected racial identity conflicts with his personal identity; underlines surface elven perspectives on the world and how they can only become villains due to tragic circumstances; and contrasts Drizzt with his racial doppelganger to explore racial and personal identities and under what conditions they can be transcended. Although Salvatore does remain within many standard fantasy conventions, he initiates a discussion on racial difference and racism in how people construct and respond to the characters and situations he creates. Through writing, he begins a personal exploration of the racial paradox central to fantasy literature and has invited his readers to ask questions and come up with interpretations and solutions. By understanding how writers represent race and the limitations writers place on race, scholars reveal the subtleties of racial thinking which permeate popular culture.

Conclusion: The Significance of Racial Representations in Fantastic Worlds

By using the elves to understand how the fantasy genre is constructed and what a race can mean to people, scholars gain insight into how racial thinking influences the genre and the resulting limitations and liberations. Personal growth experiences, whether through more traditional story-telling like Salvatore's novels or through roleplaying in *D&D*, have been rare and require people to think before even recognizing the implications of racial difference. Yet personal growth experiences can happen with increased awareness of the topic, something that is starting to occur more through the slow recognition of these deeply embedded issues. As awareness continues to grow, people are more likely to want change: people want to see if orcs are that evil and eventually some may want to see an incompetent elf. With these new curiosities, people will likely be more willing to push further the formula that has long sustained traditional tropes and to experiment with racial difference and perhaps to liberate different races so that they can be identified by a personal identity rather than a racial one.

Chapter Summaries

The elves are represented based on how they reflect cultural values and are a means to explore racial difference and how fantastic creatures relate to aspects of being human. Chapter One examined how representations reflect historical and cultural thought. Elves in Anglo-Saxon culture provide insight into popular beliefs outside of Christianity and reveal the multiple and contradictory identities as different cultures interact. Hall's work emphasizes how language reflects cultural change in how language adapted to reflect better these strange creatures who did not fit any pre-existing terms. Their variety of identities allowed them to be malleable to different authors' purposes. During the Renaissance, elves became more prominent as secondary characters in literature and were considered synonymous with fairies. Changing attitudes towards

magic allowed them to be more prominent, even helpful and admirable creatures. Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is one text which elevated the fairy in culture and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is central for defining fairy culture. These cultural fascinations diminished until the nineteenth century when they resurfaced to become especially prominent in Victorian London. As a cultural phenomena, fairies allowed people an opportunity for escapism and dreaming of better times. The Victorian era established two types of fairy: the butterfly type fairy, associated with innocence and children, and the sorrowful fairy longing for the past. The chapter then focused on Tolkien as an author and his role in changing fairy identity by renaming them as elves, and his attempts to restore what he viewed as their previous glory. He viewed his Elves as humanity idealized and helped establish other common racial archetypes in contemporary fantasy literature. His use of Elves to explore religious and spiritual issues of death and immortality allows him to use a metaphor for a deeper understanding of life. This research highlights the enduring cultural value of the elves and reveals how they reflect different periods' attempts to understand the world around them while also underlining Buccola's argument that the elves often help people explore contemporary issues, whether that is the relationship with the spirits or how to understand racial difference.

Chapter Two focused on how fantasy literature has shifted to a worldbuilding focus after Tolkien, the background for *D&D*, and the development of the drow and their success based on Salvatore's interest in them. The worldbuilding narrative focus and Tolkien's immense popularity provided the setup for *D&D* to not only bring these aspects together but to create a unique tabletop roleplaying game. *D&D*'s elves maintained their Tolkienesque identities even when Gygax and Salvatore introduced the drow who, although were intended to subvert this type of elf, retained many Tolkienesque qualities. Originally a character designed to be a tough

opponent in dungeons, they became popular through Salvatore's writings, an instance of how influential a reader becoming a writer can be in shaping a creature's influence. Changing central aspects of a creature's traditional identity questions the new shifts in what these changes mean for understanding human; changing the elf to the drow subverts an idealized race which humanity should aspire to become and reveals the darkness within.

Chapter Three focused on Salvatore's writings and Drizzt's understanding of the world's hierarchical relationships among the drow, surface elves, and humans. Salvatore claims that the fantasy genre is racist in its tendency to restrict entire races, like orcs and goblins, to a traditional racial identity with little opportunity to first present a personal identity. Some races—those beautiful and powerful like the drow—have the potential to transcend their expected racial identities because they possess other traits of cultural value, like beauty and ability. Critical race theory exposes how racial identity restricts or enhances different characters' lives through Salvatore's narratives. The comparison of the drow and the surface elves allows for an exploration of how Tolkienesque these creatures remain and the possibilities for elven villains; although the drow are evil, they are still admired—even celebrated—by readers and other characters while the surface elf “villains,” Ellifain and Dahlia, only become antagonists because of tragic childhood events and both are later redeemed. Salvatore's sympathetic writing and their redemption question whether these elves can be truly villainous at all. By having admirable creatures who either do evil perfectly or do not to evil at all, Salvatore reveals the high cultural value of these creatures and how their idealization of humanity perfected establishes the entire race as being without fault. Despite their problematic representations of black skin symbolizing their evil, their bodies are still idealized, with their heightened capabilities, revealing the connection physical representation has with ability. Finally, the chapter concludes by examining

the doubling of Drizzt and Entreri to explore the racial limitations on two individuals similar in morality but of different races. Although Entreri is Drizzt's fighting equal and many drow and non-drow characters compare him to a drow, Entreri is unable to transcend his human limitations and cannot ascend to the full drow potential. Not only did Salvatore help design a new elven identity, he created memorable characters and situations which allowed for light reading but also for profound explorations of the expectations and limitations of racial identity. Through the examination of the racial doublings in general races and doppelganger scenarios, scholars of fantasy literature and popular culture can understand embedded racial thinking that permeates popular culture.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are many directions scholars can take the research from this thesis. They can examine other fantastic creatures and their popular cultural value to explore further the racial restrictions of heroic/villainous identities. Examining more races will lead to deeper understandings of how much flexibility different creatures have for separating their personal identity from their expected racial identity, whether for good or evil, and under what circumstances these changes can occur. Many races are significantly under-researched compared to others, and in-depth analysis will allow for deeper comparisons across races and to draw further connections between cultural value and racial representations. Scholars can also compare and contrast racial representations of elves in other contemporary texts to see how different authors deal with representing them, especially in cases where the elves are not portrayed as Tolkienesque. These comparisons may provide further insight into why Tolkien's model remains the dominant elf type and any significance of the minority elven types.

Significance of this Research

The research of this thesis is significant in how current writers use the elves, as one example, to explore contemporary questions of the role and presence of racism in popular culture; makes the necessary connection of *D&D* between Tolkien and video games to show how fantasy's storytelling has shifted over the decades; and has begun to examine how racial limitations have real-life implications. Research on elves is significant for the cultural value they reflect to scholars, a fact consistent throughout history as explored in the first chapter. Their long cultural history demonstrates their enduring appeal to the masses through each identity shift. Whether through viewing how language changes to more accurately reflect what the elves are or through having them symbolize simpler times, the elves adopt new meanings unique to the period. Although elves remain idealized creatures from Tolkien to Salvatore, the drow's racially problematic portrayal examines the connection between appearance, ability, and morality and creates a creature who is an idealized monster; they have the power and abilities of great villains without losing beauty or grace. Understanding their representations grants insight into what it means to be human through this metaphor of fantastic races in general and specifically the elves and drow. This exploration of the elves not only clarifies how people appreciate this one race, but why this race has a much higher cultural value than those who are limited by appearance, ability, or morality.

D&D connects the tabletop roleplaying games with digital narratives and is a necessary link for understanding how those narratives work. Michael Witwer argues that these games make contemporary video games, MMORPGs, online virtual worlds, and other popular culture phenomena possible. With the increasing interest in these areas, it is necessary to understand the roots of these works and to provide the necessary context and background. The openness of

D&D's stories, often seen in other digital narratives, reveals the shift in contemporary fantasy towards a worldbuilding focus rather than individual stories. Salvatore's work is a fraction of the depth of the *Forgotten Realms* with other authors and game creators also working within the world. Finally, *D&D* is a popular culture mosaic, bringing stories together across times and cultures where these aspects can be brought together into one world. The intermingling of these sources allows for freedom of the cultural imagination. There are many people with the tendency to dismiss racial problems in fantasy because it is not rooted in reality, which is a dangerous dismissal "given that fantasy worlds are populated by re-imagined signs with real and significant meanings outside fantasy" (Higgin 10). It is, therefore, essential to understanding the depth of meaning these imagined creatures have in the popular imagination to see how these creatures and what they represent influence popular thought and attitudes towards reality.

D&D is significant for the opportunities the game can present for racial exploration and liberation through increasing awareness of the issue. Although the game's ludic elements encourage violent solutions for problem-solving, there are options to apply racial thinking from *D&D* to the real world and vice versa. One player describes her experiences and why this idea of racial difference is so significant and worthy of scholarly attention:

perhaps it doesn't seem important, given the pervasiveness and dangerousness of real-life racism. Perhaps it seems frivolous to suggest these instances of [role-playing game] racism have lasting consequences in our lives. But I can't help noticing that my D&D party is equally indifferent to NPCs asking my character "what's a Kalashtar doing here?" and to someone suggesting that black people are dangerous. The logic of fantasy worlds does not create racism or sexism, but rather reflects the mindset of the society in which it is made. In a society so mired with racism, it is no wonder that our fantasy worlds, the ones we escape to,

the ones we dream in, would maintain even stricter racial laws than are possible in real life.

(Joanna par. 8)

The long-lasting indifference towards racial attitudes in fantasy literature is starting to be questioned now because people are considering the real-life implications of such thinking, as Joanna does. Races in *D&D* are heavily segregated, like her comparison of a Kalashtar and someone of African descent. It is entirely possible, although difficult, to create a fantasy world with internal consistency and still be free of racial hierarchies. Her last insight—the fantasy worlds people continually return to maintain strict racial laws—reveals how little of contemporary racial thinking makes it ways to apply to fantasy texts. If Joanna placed this comparison within a real-world context, the racial discrimination behind these segregations would easily upset many people. Within fantasy worlds, however, this reaction is less common, and many people read these types of situations without thinking of the implications. The continuing strictness on racial identity's mobility has prevented many liberating experiences for readers, or even the recognition of how deeply ingrained racial thinking is. Joanna's reflection on *D&D* is an experience which highlighted the issues that she saw not only in the game and the fantasy genre but how people continue to think about the genre.

Salvatore serves as one example of the role of fantasy literature and authors in contemporary society. Salvatore admits that writing is something personal for him and he explains that his “writing is my way of making sense of a world” (Jacob par. 71). He writes for himself which helps open his works to explore the issues he sees. Salvatore recognizes the limitations his writing has, not just as contemporary fantasy but as writing for a game company to further develop a world which people may not consider to be work worthy of scholarly attention. Salvatore describes his experience as an author in how he

understand[s] that my role is to entertain, perhaps to inspire and hopefully to get the reader to ask questions for which only he can supply the answers. The thing is, people read books for all kinds of reasons: some people tell me they love my books because it's light fantasy, kind of a popcorn thing for them... Then the next email will be from someone who describes a profound reaction to my book, sometimes claiming a life-changing experience... To me, both of these emails tell me that maybe I've done a little good in the world. ("Boom Tron" pars. 3-4)

While some of Salvatore's material, especially in his early books, can be viewed as popcorn light reading, some of the ideas resonate with significant cultural problems. In the midst of popular fantasy novels which mindlessly churn out the same tropes, situations, and representations, Salvatore brings some awareness to the issues which his readers can then ponder. This thesis has limited itself to explore the representations of different characters primarily in the early works, especially with the comparisons to Entreri, although Salvatore explores this relationship over the course of over thirty books. Even within the early pages, Salvatore begins to explore how racial identity forms for a few races and how these creatures will see the world. Salvatore writes his work for himself and to explore the idea of racism in fantasy alongside other issues. His work suggests that fantasy is racist because the world is racist, and his writings have helped to explore what can be done to change it. He uses his works to explore racial restrictions and freedoms through his characters' experiences. This examination is what makes him stand out as a writer, especially as a paratext writer who may otherwise seem like someone not to take seriously. He writes to understand the world and engages in an important discussion about what it means to be human by exploring through Drizzt what it means to be an elf and a drow. Readers can then transfer this knowledge to how their lessons fit what remains humanity idealized.

The exploration of fantastic races permits for new explorations in understanding what it means to be human by examining what we aspire to become with what we fear to become. Regardless of whether people accept this idea as helpful or even applicable, this research highlights how popular culture influences fantasy literature and how people think about and understand these fantastic races. The elves have been a staple in historical and cultural thought; *D&D*'s influence in solidifying Tolkien's elven blueprint and trying to subvert elven idealization with the drows' introduction demonstrates examples of how the genre has changed to allow readers to not only interact but directly influence elven identities; finally, Salvatore's work explores his belief that fantasy is racist through how some races can transcend their expected racial identity and how others do not even have the option to try. Salvatore has helped to spread awareness not only in popular thought and fantastic settings, but also in understanding the limitations, restrictions, and aspirations of being human.

WORKS CITED

- Abrams, M.H. and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 9th ed. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009.
- Apter, T.E. *Fantasy Literature: An Approach to Reality*. Indiana UP, 1982.
- Attebery, Brian. "Introduction: Race and the Fantastic." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2010, pp. 334-337. www.jstor.org/cyber.usask.ca/stable/pdf/24352265.pdf. Accessed 30 Jan. 2017.
- . *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature: From Irving to Le Guin*. Indiana UP, 1980.
- Balay, Anne. "'Incloseto Putbacko': Queerness in Adolescent Fantasy Fiction." *Academia*. PDF. https://www.academia.edu/4938734/_Incloseto_Putbacko_1_Queerness_in_Adolescent_Fantasy_Fiction. Accessed 26 Feb. 2017.
- Barrie, J.M. *Peter Pan*. Annie Hiebert Alton, ed. Broadview Press, 2011.
- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z: An Essay*. Translated by Richard Miller. Hill and Wang, 1974.
- Barton, Matt. *Dungeons and Desktops: The History of Computer Role-Playing Games*. A. K. Peters Ltd., 2008.
- Bergman, Jenni. *The Significant Other: The Literary History of Elves*. Diss. Cardiff, 2011. <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/55478/>. Accessed 9 September 2015.
- Beowulf*. Translated by Seamus Heaney. W.W. Norton & Co., 2000.
- Brace, C.L. *The Stages of Human Evolution*. 5th ed. Prentice Hall, 1995.
- Brown, Nicola. *Fairies in 19th Century Art and Literature*. Cambridge UP, 2001.
- Buccola, Regina. *Fairies, Fractious Women, and the Old Faith: Fairy Lore in Early Modern British Drama and Culture*. Sesquehanna UP, 2006.

- Burke, Jessica. “‘How Now Spirit, Wither Wander You?’ Diminution: The Shakespearean Misconception and the Tolkien Ideal of Faërie.” *Tolkien and Shakespeare: Essays on Shared Themes and Language*, edited by Janet Brennan Croft. McFarland & Company Inc., 2007, pp. 25-41.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton UP, 1968.
- Canavan, Aidan-Paul. *Looting the Dungeon: The Quest for the Genre Fantasy Mega-Text*. Diss. University of Liverpool, 2011. <http://fantasyliterature.pbworks.com/w/file/etch/99772099/lotting%20the%20dungeon%20-%20cavavan.pdf>. Accessed 6 June 2017.
- Carroll, James L. and Paul M. Carolin. “Relationship between Game Playing and Personality.” *Sage Journals*, Vol. 64, No. 3, 1989, pp. 705-706. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2466/PRO.64.3.705>. Accessed 7 March 2017.
- Chabon, Michael. *Maps and Legends: Reading and Writing Along the Borderlands*. McSweeney’s Books, 2008.
- Collins, Alan F. “The Enduring Appeal of Physiognomy: Physical Appearance as a Sign of Temperament, Character, and Intelligence.” *History of Psychology*, vol. 2, no. 4. 1999, pp. 251-276, www.researchgate.net/publication/232564331_The_Enduring_Appeal_of_Psysiognonmy_Physical_Appearance_as_a_Sign_of_Tempoerament_Character_and_Intelligence. Accessed 16 September 2016.
- Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic. “Critical Race Theory: An Annotated Bibliography.” *Virginia Law Review*, Vol. 79, No. 2, 1993, pp. 461-516. www.jstor.org/stable/1073418?siid=primo&origin=crossref&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents. Accessed 5 May 2016.
- DeRenard, LA and Kline LM. “Alienation and the game dungeons and dragons.” *Psychol Rep*, Vol. 66, No. 3, 1990, pp. 1219-1222. http://rpgstudies.net/hughes/therapy_is_fantasy.html.

Accessed 8 March 2017.

Dickerson, Matthew and Jonathan Evars. *Ents, Elves, and Eriador: The Environmental Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Kentucky UP, 2006.

Dunsany, Lord. *The King of Elfland's Daughter*. The Random House Publishing Group, 1999.

"Elf." *OED*. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/60431?rskey=IRkTzk&result=2#eid>. Accessed 17 June 2015.

Fimi, Dimitra. "'Come sing ye light fairy things tripping so gay': Victorian Fairies and the Fairy Works of J.R.R. Tolkien." *Working with English: Medieval and Modern Language, Literature, and Dreams*, vol 2, 2005, pp. 10-26. <http://nottingham.ac.uk/english/documents/working-with-english/volume-2/fimi-come-sing-ye-light-fairy-things-so-gay-victorian-fairies-and-the-early-work-of-j.-r.-r.-tolkien.pdf>. Accessed 27 Jan. 2015.

---. *Tolkien, Race, and Cultural History: From Fairies to Hobbits*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Fine, Gary Alan. *Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds*. Chicago UP, 1983.

Gates, Henry Louis Jr. "Introduction: Writing 'Race' and the Difference It Makes." "*Race, Writing, and Difference*," edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. Chicago UP, 1986, pp.1-20.

Gimlin, Debra L. *Body Work: Beauty and Self-Image in American Culture*. California UP, 2002.

Green, Richard Firth. *Elf Queens and Holy Friars*. Pennsylvania UP, 2016.

Greenwood, Ed. *Forgotten Realms: The Drow of the Underdark*. TSR, 1991.

Gygax, Gary. Interview by Harvey Smith. "The Dungeon Master: An Interview with Gary Gygax." *Gamasutra: The Art and Business of Making Games*. www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/2934/the_dungeon_master_an_interview_.php?print=1. Accessed 26 July 2015.

---. Interview by GameSpy. "Gary Gygax Interview." *Gamespy*. <http://pc.gamespy.com/articles/538/539917p3.html>. Accessed 26 July 2015.

---. Interview by TheOneRing.net. 2000. www.archives.theonering.net/features/interview/gary_gygax.thml. Accessed 26 July 2015.

--- and Dave Arneson. *Dungeons and Dragons: Rules for Fantastic Medieval Wargames Campaigns Playable with Paper and Pencil and Miniature Figurines*. Vol 1: Men and Magic, Tactical Studies Rules, 1974.

Hall, Alaric. *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England: Matters of Belief, Health, Gender and Identity*. Boydell Press, 2007.

---. "Glosses, Gaps, and Gender: The Rise of Female Elves in Anglo-Saxon Culture." *Meaning and Change: Studies in Semantics and Grammar from Old to Present-Day English*. Société Néophilologique. 2007, pp. 139-170. Accessed 11 November 2015.

Hall, Charlie. "Out of the Abyss: D&D's Next Campaign Goes Deep into the Underdark." *Polygon*. 2015. <http://polygon.com/features/2015/9/2/9242155/out-of-the-abyss-into-the-underdark>. Accessed 6 March 2017.

Hanafi, Zakiya. *The Monster in the Machine: Magic, Medicine, and the Marvelous in the Time of the Scientific Revolution*. Duke UP, 2000.

Hartley, Lucy. *Physiognomy and the Meaning of Expression in Nineteenth-Century Culture*. Cambridge UP, 2001.

Heinsoo, Rob and Stephen Schubert. *Monster Manual 2: Roleplaying Game Supplement*. Washington: Wizards of the Coast Inc., 2009.

Heinsoo, Rob, Andy Collins, and James Wyatt. *Players Handbook: Arcane, Divine, and Martial Heroes*. Wizards of the Coast: 2008.

Higgin, Tanner. "Blackless Fantasy: The Disappearance of Race in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games." *Games and Culture*. 4.1. 2009. 3-26. <http://tannerhiggin.com>

/research/blackless.pdf. Accessed 17 December 2015.

Hughes, John. "Therapy is Fantasy: Roleplaying, Healing, and the Construction of Symbolic Order." http://www.rpgstudies.net/hughes/therapy_is_fantasy.html. Accessed 8 March 2017.

Hume, Kathryn. *Fantasy and Mimesis*. Methuen, 1984.

Hutton, Ronald. "The Making of the Early Modern British Fairy Tradition." *The Historical Journal*, vol 57, no. 4, 2014, pp.1135-1156. www.cambridge.org/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/D3061CF40CCC4B1815890F69959C1224E/S0018246X1400035a.pdf/the-making-of-the-early-modern-british-fairy-tradition.pdf. Accessed 3 July 2015.

Joanna. "Fantasy's Race Problem and Racism IRL." *Geekalitarian: Women in Geek Culture*, 2013. <https://geekalitarian.wordpress.com/2013/06/11/fantasys-race-problem-and-racism-irl/>. Accessed 19 Dec. 2016.

Keightley, Thomas. *The World Guide to Gnomes, Fairies, Elves and Other Little People*. Avenel Books, 1978.

Kirby, Danielle. *Fantasy and Belief: Alternate religions, popular narratives, and digital cultures*. Equinox Publishing, 2013.

Knodel, Mordicai. "A Modest Proposal for Increased Diversity in D&D." *Tor: Science Fiction, Fantasy, The Universe. And Related Subjects*. 2012. <http://www.tor.com/2012/04/11/a-modest-proposal-for-increased-diversity-in-dungeons-and-dragons/>. Accessed 15 June 2017.

Lavender III, Isiah. "Critical Race Theory." *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint. Routledge, 2009.

- Lancaster, Kurt. "Do role-playing games promote crime, satanism and suicide among players as critics claim?" *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1994, pp. 67-80. <http://search.proquest.com.cyber.usask.ca/docview/1297371259/fulltextPDF/362A4745470C404APQ/1?accountid=14739>. Accessed 8 March 2017.
- Laycock, Joseph P. *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds*. California UP, 2015.
- Leithart, Peter and George Grant. *A Christian Response to Dungeons and Dragons: The Catechism of the New Age*. Dominion Press, 1987.
- Lewis, C.S. "The Dethronement of Power." *Understanding the Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism*, edited by Rose A. Zimbardo and Neil D. Isaacs, pp. 11-15. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.
- Mackay, Daniel. *The Fantasy Role-Playing Game: A New Performing Art*. McFarland & Company, 2001.
- Makai, Péter Kristóf. "Faërian Cyberdrama: When Fantasy becomes Virtual Reality." *Project Muse: Scholarly Journals Online*, edited by Douglas A. Anderson, Michael D.C. Drout, and Verlyn Flieger. 7. PDF, pp. 35-53. www.muse.jhu.edu.cyber.usask.ca/article/389565. Accessed 19 July 2015.
- Marmell, Ari, Anthony Pryor, Robert J. Schwalb, and Greg A. Vaughan. *Dungeons and Dragons: Drow of the Underdark*. Wizards of the Coast, 2007.
- Martinez, Helios de Rosario. "Fairy and Elves in Tolkien and Traditional Literature." *Mythlore*, vol. 28, no 4, 2010, pp. 65-84. <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?&id=GALE|A227196959&v=2.1&u=usaskmain&it=r&p=LitRC&sw&authoCount=1>. Accessed 1 Feb. 2015.

MasqueofComus. Comment on “Books and Literature: What is the Appeal of R.A. Salvatore?”

GameFAQs. 2012. <https://www.gamefaqs.com/boards/202-books-and-literature/62013029>.

Accessed 16 June 2017.

McCracken, Scott. *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction*. Manchester UP, 1998.

Mearls, Mike and Jeremy Crawford. *Dungeons and Dragons: Player’s Handbook*. 5th ed.

Wizards of the Coast, 2014.

Nutt, Alfred. *The Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare*. Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1990.

Omi, Michael. “In Living Color: Race and American Culture.” *Cultural Politics in*

Contemporary America, edited by Ian Angus and Sut Jhally. Routledge, 1989.

Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Translated by Laurence Scott. Texas UP, 1970.

quinn. Comment on “New Rules of Fantasy #1: Evil is a Choice.” *Thoughtcrime*. 24 July 2014.

<http://thoughtcrimegames.net/new-rules-of-fantasy-1-evil-is-a-choice/>. Accessed 15 July 2017.

“Race.” *OED*. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/60431?rskey=IRkTzk&result=2#eid>. Accessed 17 July 2015.

Raghuraman, Renuka Sundaram. “Dungeons and Dragons: Dealing with Emotional and Behavioural Issues of an Adolescent with Diabetics.” *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2000, pp. 27-39. http://ac.els-cdn.com/cyber.usask.ca/S0197455699000258/1-s2.0-S0197455699000258-main.pdf?_tid=a709a866-0421-11e7-b2c3-00000aab0f26&acdnat=1488993004_18949830f5450c0bce4584b903583ecb. Accessed 8 March 2017.

Rearick, Anderson. “Why is the Only Good Orc a Dead Orc? The Dark Face of Racism Examined in Tolkien’s World.” *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 4, 2004, pp. 861-874. www.muse.jhu.edu/cyber.usask.ca/article/177550/pdf. Accessed 24 Jan. 2017.

- Saler, Michael. *As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality*. Oxford UP, 2012.
- Saldívar, Ramón. "Historical Fantasy, Speculative Realism, and Postrace Aesthetics in Contemporary American Fiction" *American Literary History*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2011, pp. 574-599. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/449336/summary>. Accessed 7 July 2016.
- Salvatore, R.A. "Dark Mirror." *The Legend of Drizzt: The Collected Short Stories*, edited by Philip Athans. Wizards of the Coast, 2011, pp. 21-57.
- . "Dark Mirror Preface." *The Legend of Drizzt: The Collected Short Stories*, edited by Philip Athans. Wizards of the Coast, 2011, pp. 10-20.
- . Facebook Messenger Message. 5 January 2017.
- . *Homeland*. TSR, Inc., 1990.
- . Interview by Boom Tron. 23 March 2015. www.boomtron.com/2009/10/the-seven-part-interview-series-with-r-a-salvatore-continues-at-bscreview-today/. Accessed 4 Aug. 2015.
- . Interview by David Craddock. "'I want to Rip Your Heart Out': R.A. Salvatore Interview (Part Three)." 16 Oct. 2014. *The Escapist*. www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/video-game/editorials/interviews/12454-R-R-Savlatore-on-the-Impact-of-Death-in-His-Drizzt-Novels. Accessed 28 July 2015.
- . Interview by Stephanie Jacob. "Interview with R.A. Salvatore." *Apex Magazine*. 71. 4 Oct. 2011. <http://apex-magazine.com/interview-with-r-a-salvatore/>. Accessed 28 July 2015.
- . Interview by *The Geek's Guide to the Galaxy*. *Lightspeed Magazine*. 22. 2012. www.lightspeedmagazine.com/nonfiction/interview-r-a-salvatore/. Accessed 28 July 2015.
- . *Night of the Hunter*. Wizards of the Coast, 2014.

- . "Northeastern University Libraries Meet the Author Series: R. A. Salvatore Author of Gauntlrym," uploaded by Northeastern University. 8 October 2010. www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKRS36WWn_o. Accessed 7 October 2014.
- . *Passage to Dawn*. TSR, Inc., 1996.
- . *Starless Night*. TSR, Inc., 1993.
- . *Streams of Silver*. Wizards of the Coast LLC, 1989.
- . *The Crystal Shard*. TSR, Inc., 1988.
- . *The Halfling's Gem*. TSR, Inc., 1990.
- . *The Lone Drow*. Wizards of the Coast LLC, 2004.
- . *The Silent Blade*. TSR, Inc., 1998.
- . *The Sea of Swords*. Wizards of the Coast LLC, 2001.
- Shank, Nathan. "Productive Violence and Poststructural Play in the *Dungeons and Dragons* Narrative." *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 48. No. 1, 2015, pp. 184-197. www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jpcu.12232/epdf. Accessed 12 May 2015.
- Shapiro, Stephen. "Lord of the Rings labelled Racist." *The Scotsman: Scotland's National Newspaper*, 14. Dec. 2002. www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/film/lord-of-the-rings-labelled-racist-1-632928. Accessed 30 Jan. 2017.
- Simpson, Jacqueline. "On the Ambiguity of Elves." *Folklore*, vol. 122, no. 1, 2011, pp. 76-83. <http://tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0015587X.2011.537133?needAccess=true>. Accessed 26 Jan. 2015.
- Shippey, T.A. *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.
- . "Light-elves, Dark-elves, and Others: Tolkien's Elvish Problem." *Tolkien Studies*, vol. 1, 2004, pp. 1-15. <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/176074/pdf>. Accessed 26 Jan. 2015.

---. *The Road to Middle-Earth*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983.

Silver, Brenda K. "Popular fiction in the digital age." *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction*, edited by David Glover and Scott McCracken, pp. 196-213. Cambridge UP, 2012.

Silver, Carole G. *Strange and Secret People: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness*. Oxford UP, 1999.

Simón, Armando. "Emotional stability pertaining to the game of Dungeons and Dragons." *Psychology in the Schools*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 1987, pp. 329-332. [http://online.library.wiley.com/woll/doi/10.1002/1520-6807\(198710\)24:4%3C29::AID-PITS2310240406%3E3.0.CO;2-9](http://online.library.wiley.com/woll/doi/10.1002/1520-6807(198710)24:4%3C29::AID-PITS2310240406%3E3.0.CO;2-9). Accessed 8 March 2017.

Smeuninx, Nils. *The Double and Literary Fantasy: A Taxonomic Exploration of their Interaction*. Diss. Ghent: Ghent UP, 2012. http://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/001/891/511/RUG01-001891511_2012_001_AC.pdf. Accessed 12 July 2016.

Spry, Gweneth Avis. *Fantasy as an Expression of Human Consciousness: Good and Evil in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*. Dissertation, Victoria University, 1994. <http://openlibrary.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/831/items/1.0091049>. Accessed 18 May 2015.

SSJMewzard. "Books and Literature: Race and the Forgotten Realms *spoilers.*" *GameFAQs*. 2015. <https://www.gamefaqs.com/boards/202-books-and-literature/69567456>. Accessed 16 June 2017.

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. 6th ed. Pearson Education Unlimited, 2012.

Sturluson, Snorri. *Edda*. Translated by Anthony Faulkes. Dent, 1987.

- Sussman, Robert Wald. *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea*. Harvard UP, 2014.
- Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971.
- Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. Columbia UP, 1997.
- Tresca, Michael J. *The Evolution of Fantasy Role-Playing Games*. MacFarland, 2010.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. Tolkien, J.R.R. *On Fairy-stories: Expanded Edition, with Commentary and Notes*, Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson, editors. Harper Collins, 2014.
- . *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, edited by Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien. George Allen Unwin, 1981.
- . *The Silmarillion*, edited by Christopher Tolkien. Harper Collins, 1999.
- Urla, Jacqueline and Jennifer Terry. "Introduction: Mapping Deviance." *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*, pp. 1-18. Indiana UP, 1995.
- Van Dyke, Chris. "Race in *Dungeons and Dragons*." *Wordpress*. 18 November 2008, n.pag. <https://raceindnd.wordpress.com/2008/11/18/nerd-nite-presentation-november-18th-2008/>. Accessed 16 Jan. 2016.
- Walden, Corey Ryan. "'A Living and Breathing World...': Examining Participatory Practices Within *Dungeons and Dragons*." Diss. Auckland University, 2015. <http://aut.researchgate.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10292/0100/WaldenC.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>. Accessed 3 May 2017.
- Ward, Rachel Louise Mizsei. *A World of Difference: Media Translations of Fantasy Worlds*. Dissertation, University of East Anglia, 2013. www.ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk/42915/1/2013MizseiWardRLPhD.pdf. Accessed 12 May 2015.

- Warnes, Christopher. “*Boulder’s Gate* and History: Race and Alignment in Digital Role Playing Games.” Conference Presentation. Word Document. 2005. <http://summit.sfu.ca/item/253>. Accessed 3 May 2017.
- Williams, Noel. “The Semantics of the Word *Fairy*: Making Meaning Out of Thin Air.” *The Good People: New Folklore Essays*, edited by Peter Narváz. Kentucky UP, 1991.
- Witwer, Michael. “The Gyga Effect: Go ahead, mock. But Dungeons & Dragons created the cultural building blocks of our information age.” *Culture Box: Arts, Entertainment, and More*. 16 Nov. 2015. www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2015/11/gary_gagax_s_dungeons_dragons_is_a_foundational_influence_on_culture_in.html. Accessed December 18, 2016.
- Woodcock, Matthew. *Fairy in The Faerie Queene: Renaissance Elf-Fashioning and Elizabethan Myth-Making*. Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004.
- Wyatt, James. *Dungeons and Dragons: Dungeon Master’s Guide*. Wizards of the Coast, 2008.
- Young, Helen. “Diversity and Difference: Cosmopolitanism and The Lord of the Rings.” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2010, pp. 351-365. www.jstor.org/cyber.usask.ca/stable/pdf/24352268.pdf. Accessed 17 Jan. 2017.
- . *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of Whiteness*. Routledge, 2016.